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Roll on 100!

I REMEMBER BUYING THE FIRST issue of PC GAMER in a shop in Witham, Essex (don't worry, I was visiting), and hated it. I didn't take Matt Bielby up on his money-back offer but it was probably due more to the lack of an envelope than desire. At the time I thought that a major problem with the magazine was a lack of PC experience by the people writing for it. And that was understandable - in 1993 the PC was a games amateur. Compared to the limelight-hogging consoles it looked ugly, expensive and had little in the way of mass appeal. Two of those things are clearly just as true today, but judging solely by the increase in PC GAMER circulation since its launch, the third will for evermore be a lie.

The manner in which the games' popularity has advanced with the machine, and the machine's evolution to help the games, prove pleasingly that we are involved with the most dynamic area of the market. Fifty issues (the amount of time Future Publishing hopes a successful computer magazine will last) in, and things have never looked better. But in tribute to the fondly remembered (by RPG, flight sim and strategy veterans), we present The History of PC GAMER.

Blade Runner was most satisfying to play this month. Personally I was banking on *The Curse Of Monkey Island* to arrive first (and it was close), but the totally revolutionary approach to creating atmosphere should advance the adventure genre as much as *Dune II* did for Westwood and strategy.

And, in tenuous link number three, strategy games prove to be the staple diet of the special free tips magazine we

present this month. From its brace of games, we've been playing *Total Annihilation* more than any other, and Mark and I are convinced it will be looked back on in years to come as a classic. Deeper, prettier and even more polished than we initially suspected, it truly is a game to own, whatever your normal persuasion.

And as this December issue heads out of the door there's just time to congratulate Matthew Pierce on his promotion to Reviews Editor.

Splendid. I wonder where we'll all be at No 100...

James Flynn
Editor



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50th

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To make
we



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- PC Gamer

"a breathtaking depth of vision"

- Edge Magazine

"Looks absolutely astounding (and we mean that without any exaggeration whatsoever)"

- PC Gamer



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JSF


INNERLOOP



EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

Scoop! Your first look at...

MIG ALLEY



(Above) "You've done some bad things, and I'm going to deal out some swift justice." (Below) "Attack, my wingmen! That's with a comma, obviously." (Right) But they'd be no match for tyrannosaurs in F-16s.



"I'll be the fearless American defender of liberty and democracy, and you can be the loathsome godless Communist oppressor." It's time to fly in the Fifties.

By JONATHAN NASH

CRAFTILY I REFER TO STEVE OWEN'S 92% review of Rowan's previous game, *Flying Corps*. With *MIG Alley*, have you finally got round to contoured terrain? *Flying Corps*' big unhilly map was, after all, a bit of a disappointment.

Kindly bafflement is noticeable in Rod Hyde's tone. "The Sonnet is flat." My bluff is called. The rapport is lost. Miles away, the frolicsome Owen cackles fiendishly in a secret base, his elaborate plot finally played out. I resolve to twang him with a ruler. "In Korea we have 8,000ft snow-capped mountains, with deep gorges spanned by bridges," continues Rowan's founder and *MIG Alley*'s designer, generously electing not to notice I am a bluffer. "Imagine flying down a steep-sided valley, chasing a MIG, then bombing a supply bridge and looking back to see the enemy steam train plunge to the ground." Imagining, in fact, happens a lot during the interview, as *MIG Alley* is still a loose thing being pulled together with drawstrings. But it is unthinkable to doubt the word of the people who gave us *Flying Corps*, truly the Simulation of Gentlemen.

(In fact, the reason *MIG Alley*'s scattered about Rowan's communal desk is that they've spent the last few months finishing the *Flying Corps* Gold Mission Editor. "It's shown us how much fun it is to make your own campaign," says Rod. "I'm sure *MIG Alley* will include the options," he adds, ingeniously linking in the plug.)

One huge campaign

Continuing Rowan's refreshing no-lock-on-and-press-space, missile-free and instrumentation light flight sim series, *MIG Alley* takes place during the 1950 Spring Offensive of the Korean War. You're in charge of a UN squadron ("Although we'd like you to be able to play either side") of around one hundred aircraft, and can distribute your resources as you see fit, perhaps flying several missions a day or bidding your time for a meaningful attack, but all within this one decisive



Let us hope the radio chatter is not performed by the programmers. Stephen Stucker from *Airplane* would be good.

"There are no missiles. And we'll be working to make ground attack a major feature." – Rod Hyde

campaign. "Your missions include high- and low-level bombing, combat air patrol, escort duty and air support," explains Rod. "For example, bomb runs would target airfields, lorry parks and the like, while in air support missions you'll be assisted by a Ground Controller, whom you must avoid bombing, or a Forward Air Controller, who flies a small prop plane, and marks the target with rocket fire. You'll then have to put your ordnance on that spot, and the FAC will rate the raid out of ten. All this is illustrated with radio chatter – for instance, you'll identify the FAC by being told to watch out for a certain plane at X o'clock rocking its wings." In fact, one plan for the network game beyond the obligatory deathmatch is to treat the whole campaign as a multi-player game – UN Sabres versus MIGs, with spotters, captains and wingmen acting as a team, and everyone probably clamouring to play the rearguard plane to demonstrate their trustworthiness.

Ridiculously detailed

Rowan are, of course, famous for their fearsome accuracy. Once again the landscape's been built up from



contemporary aerial photographs, and army maps, a frankly ridiculous number of aircraft is involved (you can fly MIG 15s, F86 Sabres, F84 Thunderjets, F80 Shooting Stars, F51 Mustangs and the FB2 ("Two F51s joined at the wing"), while the supporting cast includes the Yak-9, Yak-15, IL-10, IL-28, F4U-5N Corsair, P-47, Panther, F82 Twin Mustang, Sea Fury, Firefly, A1 Sky Raider, Meteor, C47, C54, B29, B45 Tornado and a rescue chopper; incomplete lists that mean nothing to me, but which will undoubtedly dangerously excite flight sim fans) and Rod's work on the flight models is so detailed you'd expect him to safely glide to earth if he ever fell off a ladder. But, blessedly, they're not above jiggling the rules to make sure it's, you know, fun. There'll be some *Flying Corps*-style AI tweaking to promote pilot attacks instead of sensible flying away. But, if everyone's in jets, doesn't that mean you'll just be zooming past each other at speed, like you're jousting or something?

Once more, Rod manages not to cry at my pudding-headedness. "Classic jet dogfights are very different from WW1 or modern ones. But you still need flying skills to get behind your opponents. There are no missiles. And we'll be working to make ground attack a major feature." And who would win in a fight between Biggles and Alan Alda in a large cupboard over the disputed ownership of a Toyota Corolla? "Alan Alda, because he'd change the rules. Biggles would refuse to travel back in time to try again, as he did in his feature film, because that would be cheating. Coincidentally," he adds warmly, "Biggles was my first WW1 flight sim." Miles away, the dastardly Owen raises his fist in a claw-like gesture of defiance as he falls into his own atomic reactor. I am avenged.

MIG ALLEY WILL KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE EJECTION LEVER BECAUSE...

- It's from Rowan, who are great.
- There are mountains in it, which you must fly between squeezingly.
- And trains, which you can blow up.
- With 50 planes on screen at once, dogfights are promised. Gosh.
- There's a bit with prop planes versus jet fighters.

Developer
UK Publisher

Rowan
Empire

How complete
Release date

50%
Summer 1996

Scoop! Your first look at...

M1 TANK P



(Main) Hopefully there'll be buildings in it. That you can drive through. (Above) The Ellins/Roquefort 602-D "Chunky" is a name I've just made up. (Above-right) "I AM BRIAN BLESSED! THIS IS MY CAMEO APPEARANCE!" (Right) The M1A2 Abrams has over 26,000 moving parts and was originally designed by Colonel M1A2 Abrams.



LATOON II

What else but, "Hooray Tanky Tanky!"

By JONATHAN NASH

YOU'LL HAVE TO BEAR WITH ME HERE, readers. I've set the designer of *M1 Tank Platoon II* a series of penetrating, knowledgeable questions, but the long, detailed reply doesn't seem to have arrived just yet. I expect there's an excellent reason - he could be busy designing *M1 Tank Platoon II*, for instance, or doing some shopping - but it does make examining this 'tank combat simulator' (at no point is the word 'game' mentioned, so you'll understand my hesitation at pressing on without a guide lest I mortally offend tank combat simulator fans, who are significantly scary people) a trifle difficult. Still, if we can only all keep calm for a few minutes, I'm sure the replies will turn up.

Phwee phwee phwee. Da de dum dum d...
Tsk.



"Ha! That's the road blocked, except for their all-terrain vehicles. Like tanks."

"Are these pictures from *M1TPII* a cruelly taunting jape, or can you indeed play from this delicious viewpoint?"

Of course, the thing with *M1TPII* is true: it's ridiculously incredibly complicated and realistic. I wouldn't want, for example, to mention casually you're the commander of a four-tank platoon without explaining that you can issue orders to the other tanks and let them get on with it, or 'be' that tank and try to do everything at once. That you now control your tank by telling your driver where to aim for instead of doing it yourself, players of the original game will take as read, but it's been fun to see how the designer wriggles out of dropping such a frightfully tedious bit on the grounds it was too true-to-life.

But no.

Similarly, of course, I'd expect a discussion of the

screenshots. Players of *IMIA2* Abrams, the competing tank sim, or pretty readers of PCG's review (of it!) will recall that you seemed to spend the entire time looking at a dashboard while small blobs raced past a hole in the wall. Are these pictures from *M1TPII* a cruelly taunting jape, perhaps some sort of remote-camera-type shots, or can you indeed play from this delicious viewpoint, trusting to your electric crewmen to comport themselves in an appropriate manner, dodging other wheely-boxes and exploiting your custom camouflage markings to hide convincingly behind hills without your having painstakingly to arrange things so only your gun pokes over the top each time? Obviously it's the latter, but it'd be pleasing to have a quote or two. This could

then lead naturally to an examination of the fifty or so ancillary vehicles, from ack ack jeep thingummies to big helicopters, all of which you may push around via the much vaunted radio communications section.

But, again, no.

More speculation

I'm even prevented from describing in detail the campaigns. For instance, it would be interesting to ask the designer whether modern war sims are more about US super-hero-style wish fulfilment, what with *M1TPII*'s missions including saving Egypt from a Libyan invasion, saving the Gulf from another Iraqi invasion, interceding in a war between Ukraine and Moldavia and demo 'shing a second Warsaw Pact, to which he could reply, what, are you stupid or something. It's just a tank combat simulator, and I could get in my bit about that episode of *Freakazoid* where he 'prevents' World War II by stopping the attack on Pearl Harbour, which, oddly, really upset me. Then I could mention the built-in campaign builder and the net games, which will apparently centre more on full scale battles than deathmatches.

But no... Wait! No, it was just a car alarm.

M1TPII's single-player non-made-up missions are all taken from the Gulf War and those hilarious moments when the NATO gang and the Warsaw Pact bunch almost destroyed the known universe for something to do. And there's something about landscape damage being carried over between missions, and beefy AI leading to enemy units running for it and carrying out repairs if given the chance, but, of course, that needs clarifying, with examples.

So let's hope the designer's answers arrive soon. I for one would really like to know whether in-game promotions bring command of a larger force and if an *M1A2* Abrams is faster than a leopard in a canoe.

YOU WILL WARMLY GREET *M1 TANK PLATOON II* BECAUSE...

- It's so realistic, even a special tank examiner could not tell the difference.
- Except for the boring parts, which they've taken out.
- You can call in airstrikes to annoy camouflaged opponents.
- The campaigns take you all over the world. And back in time. A bit.
- You c... He's completely forgotten, hasn't he? The juggins.

Developer
UK Publisher

MicroPress US
MicroPress

How complete
Release date

62.6%
February 1998

*"the cynical might never go there ...
... the impetuous might never return"*



PC & MAC CD-ROM

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THE TOWNS TALK & WORLD'S WONDER

THE
TINY LADY
THAT HAS STARTLED THE
CIVILIZED WORLD

THE
TINIEST LADY
IN EXISTENCE!
SHOWN
HERE **ALIVE!**

REFINED AND ENTERTAINING.

SEE
THE
WORLD'S

ADMISSION
3

SEE THE
TINY LADY
SHOWN
ALIVE!

TINIEST LADY
IN EXISTENCE!
SHOWN
ALIVE!

MOST
WONDERFUL
TINY LADY

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THE SEQUEL TO MYST

Wireplay

Join us and die

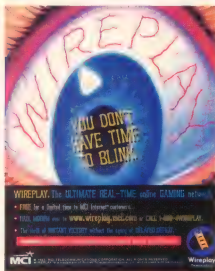
Yes it hurts, yes it works. By MARK DONALD

WE CONSTANTLY WHITTER ON ABOUT HOW GREAT deathmatch Quake is. The LAN-less masses constantly write back to us bemoaning their lack of an office full of networked PCs and the visible quality of Internet Quake. The solution to the problem is almost certainly Wireplay. For, it would seem, BT have finally got it to work properly.

Wireplay is BT's quiet multi-player server that allows modem owners to deathmatch over the standard telephone network. The inherent advantage of Wireplay is that, because it circumvents the Internet, it isn't burdened by anything like the latency problems that dog other servers available to UK gamers. But Wireplay has suffered major teething problems, from the relevance of the games available to the reliability of the service.



The all-action Wireplay interface which is remarkably easy to use.



While headaches seem to be a perennial symptom of PC use, we are heartened by a recent test of Wireplay that demonstrated to our satisfaction that it is currently the best on-line, multi-player experience available to the LAN-less. By the time you read this, Quake should be operational on Wireplay, and during a recent Beta session the might of PC GAMER swiftly crushed a 1 who opposed them. The important bit, though, is that Quake worked brilliantly. The lag-time (Ping) was down to 150 milliseconds, (100 milliseconds is imperceptible) about half the Internet average. Although not quite as swift as a LAN, Wireplay Quake is still fantastic fun, even though we've all been pampered by our luxurious networks.

Currently, Wireplay costs 2.5p per minute (£1.50 per hour) but new pricing arrangements, including bulk purchase discounting and credit card billing, are being announced next month. BT are addressing all our main areas of concern and we shall report further on these next month. If you've already convinced, then phone 0800 800 918 to demand the free Wireplay client software.

An innocent modem competition

Aye, aye, what's this? A Wireplay competition right next to a favourable article about Wireplay? There's something fishy going on here and no mistake. Or is there?

Every month we get a pile of letters, evidently written by X-File enthusiasts, who reason that our competitors are evidence of some kind of alien-military-industrial-complex conspiracy that goes to the very rotten core of PC GAMER. Naturally we're going to deny it, with a far-fetched official explanation like:

when we stumble across a quality PC-cometition item we normally ring up its purveyors and try to get them to part with a few samples, so we can joyously distribute them among our dear readers. Y'know, as a welcome little extra. But, of course, this should only heighten your suspicion. Especially when we confirm that, now Wireplay works to our gaming satisfaction and we've had plenty of the right kind of fun at its expense, BT have generously agreed to furnish us with five swanky US Robotics 33.6k modems costing

£100 each, that enable entry to some other combo worth £5,000 to the winner. How lovely is that... no wait, my god! We've been tricked! These modems could be used on the telephone network, thus feeding the depraved profit monster. You wouldn't do that, would you? The five readers to write in and promise most convincingly that they won't, will be sent a modem for safe keeping. Send your your co-operation. Thank you for your statements to: The Save Our Souls Appeal, at the customary address.

GOBBETS

IMPERIAL LINKS

You'll recall that Steve Owen, in his *Links LS 98* review, was rightly aggrieved to discover that the game had been metacised. Well, it transpires

that if you switch your Windows 95 localisation function to the US, all *Links*' measurements are dramatically converted to the Imperial system. But why Bill 'lots-o-cents' Gates thinks our entire little island goes to the pub to order a 0.73 litre of beer, lord only knows.

GOGGLEY EYES

3D Specs are not dead. Nu Vision make some that should provide you with a reasonable 3D experience. Unfortunately they're still only bundled with the predictable *Descent 2* along with *Slipstream 3000* and *Whiplash*. They cost £100 and we hope to review them soon.



THE HORROR, THE HORROR

A feature film based on Eidos' disappointing first-person shooter *Blood* is nearing production. Apparently the low-budget flick will draw inspiration from the classic Sam Raimi flicker *The Evil Dead*, and feature a cast of similarly unknown 'stars'.

Riot: Mobile Armour

Monolith's *Quake*-style game is different from all the rest. It contains scenes robot-lovers may find hard to bear.

THE MAKERS OF *BLOOD* (but don't hold that against them) bring you *Riot: Mobile Armour*, or 'Armor' as Monolith would have it. A 3D first-person action effort, *Riot* will attempt to drag the genre down new avenues by throwing robotic exoskeletons into a *Quake*-type medium. The

apparent advantage of dressing in 'Protean Combat Armour' is that, throughout the game, you'll be able to upgrade your metallic suit with various add-ons that enhance its



Monolith are developing *Riot* with the DirectEngine. Only Epic's *Unreal* and 3D Realms' *Prey* are also using proprietary technology. Everyone else is using *Quake*'s.

performance. These upgrades are, for the moment, top secret. Although we could hazard a fair guess about the nature of some of them.

There will be four hopelessly distinctive chassis to select from, and you'll even be able to shed your alloyed skin on occasions to take on the world as

naturel. The development team are heavily influenced by Anime and harbour ambitions to evoke its traits in the game, not only graphically but through character and level design. We shall keep a beady eye on this development. Monolith have also been sharp to point out that, unlike *Blood*, *Riot* is intended to sit at the same table as its next-gen rivals. Their proprietary DirectEngine will support 16 bit colour and 3D cards, while realistic AI behaviour is also, as usual, at the top of the agenda. However, our main concern at the moment is Seattle-based Monolith's misspelling of the word Armour, and its all too imaginable repercussions for our nation's impressionable youth.



Monolith are promising between 20 and 30 different baddies will be in the game.

● *Riot: Mobile Armour* will be breaking out mid 1998.



PC GAMER Recommended Games we love that are in the shops now.



Total Annihilation GT (PCG 48, 94%)
This game just gets better. All the little flaws in previous real-time strategy games have been corrected here and transformed into an intense experience that brilliantly reflects the cruel vagaries of war. TA is the biggest threat to writing this magazine we've faced in a long time.



Flying Corps Gold Empire (PCG 50, 90%)
This 3Dfx and multi-player game is a timely reminder of the many hours of pleasure *Flying Corps* has given us. Though F22 ADF will be the flight sim to buy in December, *Flying Corps* WWI originality is deserving of your close attention. Previous *Flying Corps* owners can upgrade for £10.



Jedi Knight Virgin (PCG 50, 91%)
Jedi Knight has silenced the *Dark Forces* critics as surely as Obi-Wan's nickname is Ben. Packed with fiendishly taxing puzzles and high-explosive weaponry, LucasArts have produced a Star Wars game that lives up to the quality of the licence. Probably the best single-player game of its type.



Broken Sword 2 Virgin (PCG 49, 88%)
The flagging adventure genre has recently received some much needed heart massage in the shape of *Blade Runner* and *Broken Sword 2*. *Broken Sword* engrosses with a plot more twisted than a Tory MP, which involves all manner of Ancient Mayan monkey business.



X-COM: Apocalypse (PCG 46, 93%)
X-COM: Apocalypse makes a welcome return to the Recommended box this month thanks to its slightly more sedentary turn-based, freeze time charms. This sequel is as brilliant as any of its predecessors and a hugely enjoyable strategic challenge.



Virtua Fighter 2 Sega (PCG 49, 86%)
This got a somewhat paltry score in terms of the exalted Recommended box, but it is the best PC beat-'em-up known to the western world, and we haven't put one of those in for ages. We'd like to recommend a driving game but nothing yet matches GP2.

**You buy
White Label Doubles.
Two great games
for only £14.99.**

**You play them
so much you forget
to feed the cat.**

**The cat eats
the goldfish.**

**It knows you'll be
angry so it hides in
the microwave.**

**It's the Animal
Welfare League.**

**The judge gives you
six months.**

**You pop in
a meal and switch it on.
Three minutes later
the bell rings.**

**Your cell mate is
a sixteen stone animal
rights activist.**

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two great games
for only £14.99.**

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Doubles.
Sorry.**

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the Last Crusade™
Indiana Jones and
the Fate of Atlantis™**

**Sam and Max
Hit the Road™
Day of the
Tentacle™**

**Rebel Assault™
X-Wing™
Collectors CD.**



Micro Machines V3

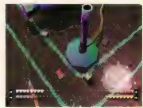
The mini is back.

Brrumm, Brrumm

MICRO MACHINES, AS IF you didn't know, is the game of leprechaun cars zipping around Borrowers themed tracks. As a multi-player game it was the hilarious, motorised equivalent of *Bombberman*. Up to four competitors invaded each others' personal space around a single monitor, and negotiated house-bound circuits littered with hazards like sticky marmalade and car launching pop up toasters; zoomed round toilet seats and spiralled down plug holes. You get the idea.

Micro Machines V3 heartily promises more of the same, but, BUT the loopy courses will apparently be modelled in true 3D. We're not entirely sure how that'll help, but it should look a lot better especially with 3D card support. As well as cars, there'll be buggies, boats, trucks and camper vans plus hidden weaponry to soup-up the vehicles. Firefields, fire ball and hammers all make an appearance along with the teeth-gnashing grabber claw that snatches rival vehicles and chucks them to the back of the race.

● *Micro Machines V3* will roar onto the PC in February.



(Above) There'll be 48 courses, 32 vehicles and 10 different types of racing events like head to head, where you get to add opponents cars to your private collection.

Sorry!

We have erred twice significantly in the last couple of issues and for this we are sorry. Last month we printed the second batch of *X-COM:Apocalypse* cheats in *Foal Play* which failed to work. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, they were not tested before going to press. We are endeavouring to extract some fully functioning cheats from our *MicroProse* sources.

The other offence we must draw to your attention is the erroneous

information printed about the Westwood feature on the issue hacking card. We had to withdraw this article at the eleventh hour, by which time it was too late to alter the content of the card. This feature will be expanded and included in next month's issue as a special Westwood supplement. Again, our apologies for any disappointment this may have caused. Appropriate disciplinary action has been taken for the good of those responsible.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Languishing in the eternal fire of software development hell...

Blade Runner (Virgin)	November
The Curse Of Monkey Island (LucasArts)	November
Dalkatana (Eidos)	April
Deathtrap Dungeon (Eidos)	February
Duke Nukem Forever (GT)	May
F22 ADF (Ocean)	December
FIFA 98 (EA)	November
Half Life (Sierra)	February
Hardwar (Grenalia)	March
Populous 3 (EA)	March
Prey (3D Realms)	February 1999
Quake II (Activision)	December
Sentinel Returns (Psygnosis)	April
SimCity 3000 (EA)	March
Sin (Activision)	March
Starcraft (Blizzard)	December
Tomb Raider II (Eidos)	November
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter (Acclaim)	January
Ureel (Epic)	February
Wing Commander Prophecy (EA)	January

THE FULL MONTY

This rather handsome offering is evidence of a serious bid by Utopia Technologies to challenge *Tomb Raider* for the top running-about-and-jumping 3D game crown.

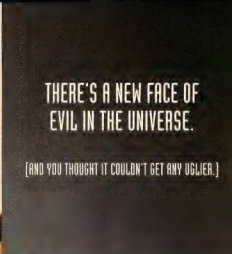
Utopia promise plenty of brain-tenderising puzzles

and looking up and down action in *Montezuma's Return*, the rather belated sequel to their massive 8-bit hit *Montezuma's Revenge*.

As the title implies, the game will be set amid the splendour of the Aztec Kingdom and will starkly demonstrate the power of

progress by bundling the original *Monty* game free.





THERE'S A NEW FACE OF
EVIL IN THE UNIVERSE.

(AND YOU THOUGHT IT COULDN'T GET ANY UGLIER.)



YOU'RE DASH RENDAR - QUICK ON
THE TRIGGER OF A BLASTER.



IT'S YOU AND YOUR TINY SNOW SPEEDER
VERSUS A GIANT, WALKING A.T.A.T.



SPEEDER BIKE MODE - FAST-PACED
ACTION WITH A KICK START.

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3D
ACCELERATOR

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villain of the Dark Side. In
Shadows of the Empire, you'll
encounter him along with a host

of new *Star Wars* characters, vehicles and locations. With your 3D accelerator, it's a fast, sharp, colourful universe - so detailed, in fact, you can see the trigger of a blaster. Enter the fray in 5 gameplay modes; ground shooter, space combat, speeder bike, jet pack and snow speeder - all in an effort to protect Luke from the evil clutches of Xizor - a face of evil so dark, you'll only find him in the shadows. www.lucasarts.com



Eastern Front

All's quiet

The game with more front than Selfridges.

TALONSOFT HAVE finally administered the gas to their aged Battleground series and are now primed to carpet bomb us with their latest doomday weapon: the Campaign series. The very name chills the blood in our veins. Their first strike will be *Eastern Front*, which threatens to knock us sprawling with its exhaustive depiction of tactical platoon combat in the Soviet Union circa 1941-45.

The biggest tank battle ever fought, Kursk, is included along with the siege of Stalingrad. On the face of things, *Eastern Front* doesn't really look all that different from the previous Battleground episodes. Graphically it's been heavily touched up but menus and display option choices remain decidedly similar. Apparently, though, the game system has been completely overhauled. Gone, unlamented, are the phase-based



A beautiful Christmas postcard scene depicting Stalingrad being starved.

turn sequences, replaced by an Action Point system similar to *X-COMs*. Also MIA are the hand-drawn maps replaced by more navigable tile-based rendered terrain. Quietly revolutionary. There'll also be a customisable scenario editor, and a proper campaign allowing you to follow the progress of the war in a series of linked, historically accurate scenarios.

● *Eastern Front* will be subjected to review next month

Burn out

Take 2 (the 'artists' formerly known as 'Gameltek') have acquired purveyors of the *Jetfighter* flight sim series. Such gripping news does have its consequences, however, namely the release of *Jetfighter 4* next year and, before then, a kind of 'Homo Erectus' intermediate stage known as *Jetfighter: Full Burn*. *Full Burn* is congenitally



based on the year-old *Jetfighter 3* engine but has evolved to incorporate the MiG-42, the Russian stealth fighter, and its

F22 has mutated enough to be reclassified as an F22N. The full repercussions of this we'll doubtless explore next issue.

● *Jetfighter: Full Burn* will apparently fall in '97.



Would you rather fly an F22N or an F22 ADP? Ooh, the agony of choice.

"CAN YOU GET ONE PAST DES?"

So you think you know your sport? Come on, prove it! Don't just sit there shouting at the telly, see if you're as sharp as you think with *Result*, the new interactive sports quiz on CD-ROM. BBC's Mr. Sport, Des Lynam, is ready to pitch you over 3,000 questions, featuring video clips, audio extracts and stills of top sporting action. Play *Result* and find out if you really have all the answers.

IT'S A RESULT

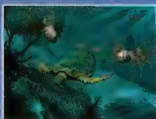
<http://www.bbc.com/sport>

Free BBC 'Match of the 70's' video with first 10,000 copies sold.



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This product supports Force Feedback devices

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The Dark Project

With the *Quake* clones slipping like old men on ice, here's a quick look at one of the rivals they'll meet next year.

SHAME ON YOU PC GAMER readers. Shame on you for shunning *Terra Nova*, *Filigris Unlimited*, *Shadow Caster* and *System Shock*. All startlingly original Looking Glass games that subsequently sold about six copies to the development team's mums. But, and this doesn't happen very often, you have a chance to make amends. For Looking Glass are crafting their response to the Age of *Quake* and the stagnation of the adventure, the title of which you'll find above your eyebrows. It is, in modern parlance, a 3D action adventure. Meaning it'll smash a true 3D engine into puzzle-solving and RPG elements, hopefully producing a more complex experience that'll build upon the innovations of *System Shock*. The backdrop is obviously a foreboding



Examine *The Dark Project* clip on the CD.

medieval milieu, a setting which has inspired Looking Glass to concoct the multi-player 'thetftmatch'. In this, small teams of thieves compete under time pressure to steal the most loot from local NPCs and their guards.

● Unfortunately, *Dark Project* is in no danger of release. It may come to fulfillment next spring.



Another stab



Soccer Nation Amnesty International

PREVIOUSLY WE HAVE NOT been very kind to Soccer Nation, the football game that, for the first time ever, melds arcade action with the more sedate management side of things. But, having been subjected to a re-education session of frightening rigour, we're prepared to hold up our hands and admit that our earlier misgivings may have been a bit hasty.

The big deal with Soccer Nation is, thanks to massive corporate backing from the likes of McDonald's, Sunsoft's raised the cash to set up a massive intranet sever to allow players to take their teams on-line and compete in on-

going organised league and cup tournaments. The management aspect is terrifyingly detailed and should be a match for the Champ, FIFA and Premier Mans. While the arcade game, though clearly not state of the art, looks serviceable enough and, crucially, should dovetail effectively with the decision-making on the management side.



● Soccer Nation will now kick-off in February as it's slipped again, but if you're interested, not in the winning or the losing, but in the taking part, then Sunsoft's Web address is <http://www.sunsoft-games.com>.

When F22s ruled the Earth

Grinning proudly after the success of *F22 Lightning II*, Novalogic are poised to release the sequel: *F22 Raptor*. After fielding criticism that, for all its loveliness, *F22 Lightning II* was actually a little bit simplistic and lacked a decent campaign, *Raptor* rather hopes to correct this. Perhaps it can be seen as the serious sibling of *Lightning*, as it incorporates more realistic simulation with a story-oriented mission structure.

Still, it is unlikely the game will support 3D accelerator cards, and at this stage looks less impressive than DID's amazing *F22 Air Dominance Fighter*. Novalogic



Asargh! I've got F22s before my eyes.

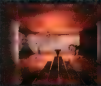
will have to work very hard between now and the projected release date in March to beat the current competition. All the best.

STARSHIP TITANIC

Douglas Adams, author of the increasingly inaccurately termed Hitchhikers trilogy, is apparently 'creating' *Starship Titanic*, the adventure game. It's a 3D rendered pointy-click type thing, populated with all manner of no-doubt-hilariously dysfunctional robots,

occupants of the eponymous *Starship Titanic* ("The Ship That Cannot Possibly Go Wrong") which has crashed into 'your' front room. We're promised an ultra-complex character interaction system, enabling you to type in lengthy sentences to elicit "over 30,000 words" of response, along with

puzzles which apparently will 'occur through the ship in a



variety of ways". No doubt our forthcoming review will make everything somewhat clearer.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

Another strategy game venture from GT based on the dated Jeff Wayne concept album and not the seminal novel by H.G. Wells. Nevertheless, it seems to

rely heavily on Wells' imagery, like enormous Martian Tripod war machines, and is set in 19th Century Britain in a move hauntingly reminiscent of the book. The early pictures look promising although we're slightly disturbed to hear that the game will include all of Jeff's arrangements.

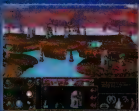
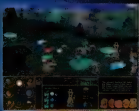
The TONE REBELLION

A REAL TIME STRATEGY GAME

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BORN OF UNCONSCIOUS SPIRIT.

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THE HERO



Take control of a worthy species in trouble. Guide them as they grow in strength and learn new techniques and spells. Explore the shattered island worlds and when strong enough, unlock the mystery of the darkness and face the Leviathan.

Real time tactics and resource management will challenge the devoted gamer, while stunning immersive environments will convince anyone that computer games have finally come of age.

From The Logic Factory, award winning publisher of Ascendancy, Best Strategy Software of 1996.



THE LOGIC FACTORY

PC
CD Rom



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Music by: Kieron L. O'Leary Entertainment Europe Ltd. Virgin is a registered trademark of Virgin Enterprises Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

The Golf Pro

A good walk ruined

THE TROUBLE WITH GOLF games, of course, is that they're nothing like the real thing. Or perhaps (club-haters would argue) that's their strength.

Either way, clicking a mouse three times to take every shot – the control system advocated by EA's all-conquering PGA series – is unquestionably dissimilar to the experience delivered by traipsing round a damp field occasionally ploughing the end of your club into the ground a few inches from the ball.

Empire plan to correct the

discrepancy – a bit – with the introduction of a system they call 'MouseDrive' (similar to Sierra's mouse swing system) whereby instead of clickity-clicking you sort of 'push' the mouse, with strength and direction of impact directly affected by your wrist movement.

It sounds very like the immensely successful 'cue push' system pioneered by Interplay's *Virtual Pool*, which suddenly proved how inadequate previous simulative attempts had been.

Accordingly, we anticipate its arrival



Golf games always seem to take place on beautiful sunny days. How fortuitous.



If you end up in the trees, we reckon a 3D Deathchase-style sub-game should ensue.

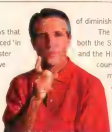
with restrained eagerness.

By comparison, the news that *The Golf Pro* has been produced 'in conjunction with' veteran master Gary Player, whose every move has been painstakingly digitised, enabling you to 'be' the ageing teemeister himself, while proving itself worthy of our attention, is

of diminished import.

The fact that it will feature both the St Mellion International and the Hilton Head National course, meanwhile, elicits a mere grunt of acknowledgement.

● *The Golf Pro* should be reviewed next month

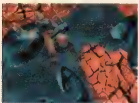


Die By The Sword

Hirsute heroism

THE STAR OF INTERPLAY'S latest may look like the lost member of the Village People, but he is, in fact, the hero of their foray into the Tomb Raider genre, *Die By The Sword*.

As the title hints, it's a long blade you're wielding rather than a pair of Lugers, and it's the innovative control



What's going on here then? We don't know.

method designed to help you make amputees of your foes that sets it apart from the burgeoning competition. Mouse movement governs the direction and even power of your sword swings, giving you total directional freedom to aim your slice at specific parts of your hapless victims. And, in vintage Python-style, if you manage to lop off one of their limbs, they keep on attacking – even hopping comically if you succeed in hacking one of their legs off.

Apparently a significant amount of puzzle-solving punctuates the carnage, so hopefully we'll be looking at some kind of alternative System Shock soon.

● Don your chainmail in anticipation for a spring release.

CRIME PAYS

Real-time strategy goes mafia, with the launch of a new Internet-only multi-player game called *Legal Crime*. The brainchild of Finnish developers Byte Enchanters, each player takes a Godfather role, competing against other Dons to try to win control over Chicago city. The means of your disposal are

innovative, including extortion, money laundering and embezzling, as well as simple down-to-earth shotgun battles.

A free 15-minute download is available from <http://www.lawtencrime.com>, although the one-off lifetime membership fee of £15 is hardly going to break the bank.

AS A
G-POLICE OFFICER
YOU'LL MIX WITH THE
CRIMINALLY INSANE,
THE TOTALLY CORRUPT
AND THE DANGEROUSLY
VIOLENT.

THEN YOU'LL LEAVE THE BRIEFING ROOM.



IN LAW, WE TRUST

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DESERT ISLAND CD-ROMS

Time once again to threaten a prominent figure of the videogames industry with a solitary life on a desert island, just so we can discover what games are near and dear to their heart.

THIS MONTH...

Charles Cecil

Position: Head of Revolution Software

Brief history: In 1980, while at University, Charles Cecil began writing adventure games for Artistic Computing, a Unix Centre. Step Of Doom and Espionage Island. He then joined Artistic as a director and worked at the company after leaving university, before being lured onto the publishing side by US Gold. In 1988 he became development manager at Activision (UK), before having to found Revolution in 1990, debuting with *Lure Of The Temptress*, then *Beneath A Steel Sky*.

Current project: Just completed *Broken Sword 2: The Smoking Mirror* for Virgin Interactive.

"I'd rather like the idea of being marooned on a sun-drenched desert island, left to sunbathe and catch up on my games playing. There would be plenty of time to re-play some of the classics and reflect on why, many years later, they have never been surpassed in terms of gameplay.

"If or my retro moods, I would keep the first game that really hooked me - ZX Galaxians on the ZX81, published by Artistic Computing in 1981. For the time, the visuals



This is SimCity, look away readers.

were stunning, but, more importantly, the gameplay was excellent.

"Elite would be next - the Egnites version. All my friends reached the rank of Elite but I never felt that far. This is a true classic, which has never been matched. It would be nice to try and work out what a sequel would have to do to surpass this classic."

"I would certainly pick a copy of *Warcraft II*. I spent so much time playing the game when it first came out that I had to banish myself from the computer to wear myself away. I never got to find out what happened at the end and would relish the chance to find out.

"I would then take a copy of *SimCity*. I still don't know why this game worked so well. And since the many later Sim games have never quite matched the original, I am not sure than anyone else does either!

"And finally, I would take *Broken Sword 2: The Smoking Mirror* published by Virgin in October so that I could reminisce about what state-of-the-art games looked like when I was marooned in 1997..."



A typical *Broken Sword 2* picture that, if we're lucky, has a Desert Island theme.

PC WORLD
THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE

Charts

THE OFFICIAL PC GAMER TOP TWENTY

In conjunction with PC WORLD, the UK's leading PC retailer

Aaaargh! Riven goes straight in at Number One and laughs mockingly at our impotence. It is the quality-immune, reason-evading Stallone-movie of computer games. And we, the guardians of the PC gaming taste, are unable to stop its army of supermarket purchasers.

Up Down Non-mover New entry Re-entry

Top 20 CD-ROM

1	●	Riven	Broderbund
2	●	Jedi Knight	Virgin
3	●	Flight Simulator 95	Microsoft
4	●	Total Annihilation	GT
5	●	International Rally Championship	Europress
6	●	Heaven II	Activision
7	●	Age Of Empires	Microsoft
8	●	Dark Reign	Activision
9	●	Dungeon Keeper	EA
10	●	Championship Manager 95/96	Eidos
11	●	Lands Of Lore II	Virgin
12	●	Broken Sword 2	Virgin
13	●	Quake	GT Replay
14	●	Incubation	Blue Byte
15	●	Constructor	Acclaim
16	●	Shadows Of The Empire	Virgin
17	●	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse
18	●	Theme Hospital	Building
19	●	Carmageddon	SCI
20	●	Civilization II	MicroProse

Your most wanted

The Big Five sit comfortably in the positions of grace and favour they've been dominating for months now. *Jedi Knight* will be the first to ascend to your hard drives and it would seem from our authoritative review on page 94 that you've been right to hunger for it so rapaciously. The message for developers would seem to be: to achieve a coveted Most Wanted chart place start

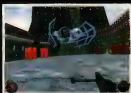
tooting a *Quake* game.

But enough, let us extend our hearty congratulations to **Saul Morvad** of *Stockport* for he shall have *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* bestowed upon him, thanks to his voting prowess. Everyone else should register their concerns to the following address:
My Most Wanted, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW.

Pos.	Game wanted	Vote share	Pos.	Game wanted	Vote share
1	●	24%	6	●	7.5%
2	●	16.5%	7	●	6.5%
3	●	15%	8	●	4%
4	●	11%	9	●	3.5%
5	●	8.5%	10	●	3%



If you see this game do not approach it.



TE Bomber vs Chewie's crossover? Easy.

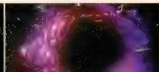
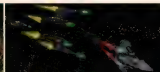


the most destructive
force in the universe...



A... ..

Wing Commander: Prophecy The adventure begins. When you're trained for
 every threat known to mankind, you only find out the unknown





has found you.

WING COMMANDER
PROPHECY





SPECIAL REPORT

YOU'VE BEEN SLAYERING with anticipation over 'that' game's release for almost a year. Time and time again, hopes have been built up by magazine coverage — "THIS WILL BE THE BEST THING EVER!" they shout — before being dashed by yet more fabled development delays and disappearances. Eventually, *Osiris X: Battle Of The Underworld* arrives in the shops to a muted silence from magazines across the board. Lots of preview coverage a while back, a slick ad campaign that spread like a rash across the tips pages for months, but, no trace of a review.

Predictably enough, *Battle Of The Underworld* is more like a Bag of Shite when you install it back home. "So why were there no reviews in the magazines to give me an idea," you justifiably ask? "I don't have to believe their every word but an indication would have been good?" For the most part — as classically illustrated by *Rise Of The Robots* — the answer would be because PR people, secure in the knowledge that bad reviews are very bad for sales, haven't sent the game out for review. This approach causes a large gap between the game's release and reviews being published and, in the light of any

opinions to the contrary, many early punters buy the game and regret it. This issue, *Outpost 2* and *7th Legion* could controversially be described as fitting nicely into this category.

Getting it right

So wouldn't it be good to have known? Back in the days when I avidly bought PC magazines every month, their reviews were undoubtedly the most crucial element in the entire package. After all, inaccurate reviews can cost you £40. Editing reviews boils down to one simple premise — it is imperative to get the score absolutely correct. To the nearest percentage in that reviewer's and magazine's opinion. This is based on a

Unfinis

Do you trust us?

It's a tricky one this, and no mistaking it. Following last month's introduction from the US perspective, here's how we see the question of reviewing 'not from the box' software. Reader service or rip-off — you decide...

By JAMES FLYNN

there are three tracks waiting to be added to an F1 game, we won't review '1. If the creature AI "has just a few little tweaks to go" we won't review it. If the game is bugged to pieces... you get the message. However, and here we go, if an installation routine features placeholder (temporary) graphics instead of the final ones and the rest of the game is complete, I would say that was not significant. Waiting for a (essentially identical) boxed copy of the game and therefore publishing the review two to six weeks after the game has been released isn't much use to anyone who's thinking about buying the game. *Command & Conquer* had the best installation routine ever written and

that didn't add one per cent to any score on any magazine as far as I'm aware. It certainly shouldn't have, anyway.

Reasons for waiting

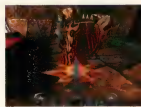
Two obvious questions rear their ugly heads: "How do you define 'significant' when you're looking at the list of points remaining to be implemented? Obviously it's not just installation routines!" and "How come you sometimes have a review a month before everyone else — surely adding a couple of graphics can't take that long?"

'Significant' is any aspect of the game that would affect the way it plays, or the general feeling of well-being (or not well-being) that the player receives

"Waiting for a boxed copy makes a minuscule difference to the software reviewed and would arguably be a disservice to readers who expected up-to-date reviews."

massive number of factors that come with experience and lengthy play, but whatever the result they have to be factually correct and, if pressed, the reviewer must be able to answer hard questions about their decisions.

Therefore, reviewing software that is remotely likely to differ in any significant way from the boxed version you buy in town is wrong. Period. If



Blade Runner — The final weeks

This month's PC GAMER has the first *Blade Runner* review in the world. Here's why that's no cause for alarm:

20 September — All game features implemented. Bug testing continues.
6 October — Return from Westwood having collected all four discs and

generated cover image with their artists.
10 October — Compressed video finally fits on four CDs.
14 October — New version of game arrives.
20 October — French & German versions (7,000 lines take well over a

week) finished.
18 November — Worldwide release of game.
25 October — All configuration testing complete.
31 October — Game is completed.
31 October — Magazine with *Blade Runner* cover goes on sale.



One magazine even went as far as to review the shareware version of *Quake*.

hed business



How it all works

The UK is somewhat different to most markets in its operation, but there are basically three sides to the software sales triangle – the publisher's marketing department, the respected games magazines and the buyers for high street chains like the Dixons Group. Buyers use scores from magazines like **PC GAMER** to

help in their initial and subsequent stock purchases, therefore marketing departments want magazines to carry their reviews (assuming they're over 80% – roughly the cut-off point for large shop orders on any game without a pedigree). Now you see why using the full 100% marking scale is so rare...

while playing, AI, pathfinding, loading times; if we get a pre-master version in for review that looks as if it could be ready, the reviewer will play it for a while and decide. If we don't consider it to be ready, then we'll wait. You won't find reviews of *Flight Unlimited II*, *TOCA Touring Car Championship*, *Actua Soccer 2* and others in this issue precisely for that reason.

The best example of getting this premise wrong is *Grand Prix 2*, which appeared on the cover of **PC GAMER** 27. Every

magazine (but as I wrote the first review I'll hold my hands higher than the rest) reviewed it at about the same time, six months before the game was released. All the features were there, but then MicroProse US decided to add more. It's embarrassing, wrong and no-one here wants it to ever happen again.

The next point is more straightforward. Between the game being completed and the boxes hitting the shelves at least two – and more likely three or four – weeks elapse. When we



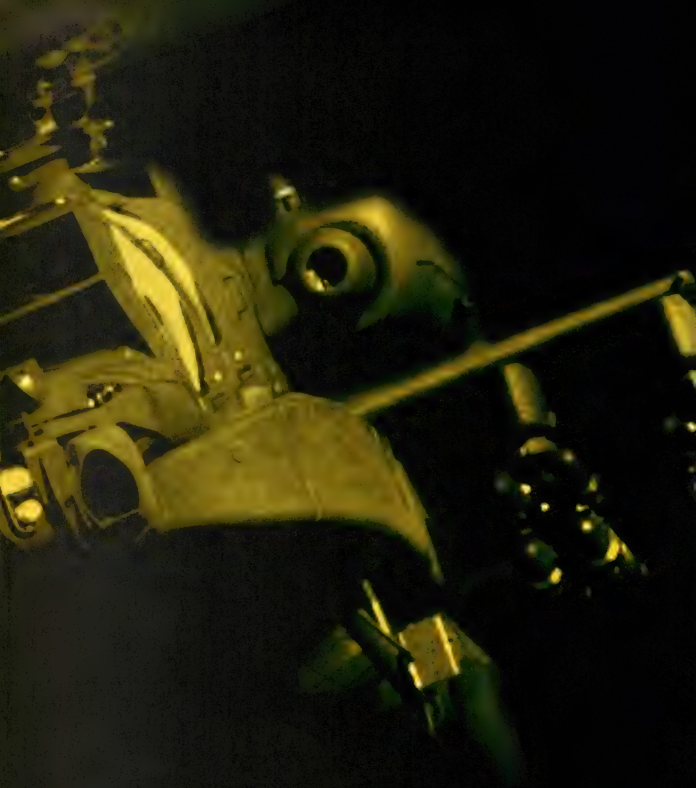
(Main) *Flight Unlimited II* wasn't ready for review this issue so we didn't review it. *Grand Prix 2* wasn't one of our finest moments but *Dungeon Keeper* was beautiful.

arrange exclusive (i.e. first) reviews we generally exclude other magazines from printing a review for two weeks after that issue is on sale, hence the delay. Other magazines may have different policies.

Waiting for a boxed copy – if ANY magazine actually did – makes a minuscule difference to the software reviewed and would arguably be a disservice to readers who expected up-to-date reviews.

For us, the most important part of the magazine is the review text and scores. They matter to you and they matter to the people who've spent a couple of years creating the game. We've

spent the last two years building up a reputation in the trade and marketing sectors and (hopefully) on the high street as the toughest but fairest markers. We are never going to jeopardise that for the sake of cutting corners (either score-wise or in terms of software being ready for review). But we also want to be of some service to you when the game is actually released, rather than six weeks after. It's taken two years to reach this point, and, as fanatical gamers above all else, whenever a review appears we're absolutely satisfied that what we play will be what you play.



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The finest flight simulator ever made is now even more super thanks to a built-in mission editor and improved graphics. **92%**

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If you want to be Frank Williams, and you are not already, then this is probably your best bet. It's obsessively detailed. **85%**

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The biggest selling game last Christmas and for good reason. It's the benchmark standard for real-time strategy games. **95%**

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CIVILIZATION II

This year's No. 1 game in the PCG Top 100 chart, this is the ultimate empire building strategy game. Get it. **96%**

RRP £44.99



BROKEN SWORD

Immerse yourself within the legends of the Templars in this enormous and immaculately designed adventure. **90%**

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PREMIER MANAGER 97

Arguably the best footy man game there is. The breakthrough, apparently, is the ability to watch actual match highlights. **80%**

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FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE

One of the finest space strategy games ever. An incredibly detailed, compelling and replayable experience. **91%**

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The environment of *Myth: The Fallen Lords* is so real that every bloody limb, every scattered sword, every unexploded charge tossed by a ground-rippling explosion remains a live element ready to be seized and used by or against you.

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WHAT IS THIS THAT WE HAVE CREATED?

It's a question that's been asked many times over the years, and the answer is always the same: "We've created a masterpiece." But what if we've created a monster? What if we've created something that's beyond our control? What if we've created something that's... **evil**?





Command & Conquer: Red Alert



Cardinal



PC game ever



Sluggish



FIFA 96



Quake

Rocking

board walk



QUAKE II:

THIS IS THE NEW ONE



LOOK BACK IN GAMER

LAWS, BLIMEY AND, NOT to put too fine a point on it, flip. PC GAMER is 50 issues old.

That means it's four whole years since 'Vol 1 No 1' bungee-jumped on to the news-stands, trumpeting "This Is The Future Of PC Games!" all over its cover. It had two floppy disks on the front, too, offering world exclusive demos of *Beneath A Steel Sky*, *Micro Machines* and *Subwar 2050*. Inside, *IndyCar Racing* scooped Game Of The Month, although there was speculation that "Geoff Crammond's *Formula One Grand Prix* sequel for '94" might turn out to be better. It did, of course - in '96. Elsewhere, the PC proved obstinately unable to match 16-bit consoles at their own game, with the dismal *Street Fighter II* picking up a mere 46 per cent.

And now, of course, everything's changed. Well, nearly everything - games are still released years late, of course. But the PC has proved itself a master of every conceivable game genre, inventing several new ones along the way. Real-time strategy wargames? Thanks very much. 3D shoot-'em-ups.

You're welcome. Interactive movies? Don't mention it. No, really, don't.

With a 3D card having become as indispensable an upgrade as a CD-ROM drive, new PC titles are trouncing state-of-the-art consoles at their own games. And still the system leads the way, innovation-wise - the last few months alone have seen *Dungeon Keeper*, *Little Big Adventure 2*, *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* and *Total Annihilation*.

Through all this upheaval, all this excitement, PC GAMER has been there for you, packed to the face with the most piercingly accurate reviews, the sharpest-eyed news, the very finest demos, and all manner of exclusive stuff. With a laugh, a cheery wave, and a polite enquiry after your bowel problem, it greets you every month, to steer you straight through the potentially baffling world of cutting-edge cyber-balloons.

Let us, then, celebrate these facts. All of them. Let us *bleat* gaily into the past, let us disperse the mists of time with heaving puffs, and reminisce fondly about the good times and - yes - the best times.



Top Sellers: *SimCity 2000*, *Flight Simulator 5*, *Premier Manager 2*
 Cables: "Why oh why do all new RPGs requires a 386 as a minimum?"



Issue 2



"Very few of you have taken me up on my 'If you don't love this magazine...' offer," notes Matt in his editorial introduction. "Thank goodness," he adds. GOTM: *Saw & Max Hit The Road*. "The wildest, funniest, bestest adventure game you'll

play this year or next."

Also Recommended: *SubWar 2050*, *Chessmaster 4000 Turbo*, *Fury Of The Furries*, *Blondart*
 Top Sellers: *Frontier: Elite 2*, *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5, B-Wing*
 Cables: "If you have any more information on *Rur Of The Robots*, please print it!"



awarded 94%, has slipped further and further down our Top 100s, coming to rest most recently at a scabby 73. The truth is simple: both Jonathan Davies and James Flynn hate it. It's just one of those opinion-dividing games; Gary loved it back in 1994, and millions of people seemed to

agree with him, as it spent an astoundingly long time near the top of the charts, but there's an equally large body of folk who've never been able to stand the thing. A similar thing happened, later, with *Wings Commander III*. Interestingly, GOTM: *SimCity 2000*. "The most impressively detailed and involving game on any computer system ever."
 Also Recommended: *Unnecessary Roughness*, *Evacue Action*, *A-Train*, *Wickid*
 Top Sellers: *Alone In The Dark 2*, *Premier Manager 2*, *TFX*
 Cables: "I have recently been assessing the possibility of purchasing an IBM compatible Personal Computer and also writing long-winded letters to computer-orientated publications in an attempt to appear to know what I am talking about, when, in fact, I am a complete bunion head."

Issue 8



Amongst a vast array of low-quality games this month, a CD-ROM called *Plumbers Don't Wear Ties* stands out as the very rottenest banana in an unusually over-ripe bunch. Reviewer Jon Smith describes it as "an irksome and yobbishly

executed pseudo-pornographic photo-story with the wit and charm of an elephant's arse... the nadir of entertainment," before awarding the disc a mere 3%, which remains to this day the joint lowest score we've ever given.

GOTM: *Overlord*. "Without doubt the leader of the current batch of World War II-inspired games and - for the moment, at least - easily the best PC flight simulation you can buy."

Also Recommended: *World Cup USA 94*, *Syndicate Plus*, *The Horde*

Top Sellers: *SimCity 2000*, *Cannon Fodder*, *Premier Manager 2*

Cables: "Hello, I've nothing in particular to write about..."

Issue 6



An overabundance of top-rated games this month, with *Pacific Strike* (93%) and *Ultima VIII* (93%) vying for Game Of The Month, and *Elder Scrolls: Arena* and *Fleet Defender* squabbling over their leftovers. All this excitement leaves no room for the long-awaited PC appearance of *Myst* - then Deputy Editor Chris Buxton awards it a mere 59%. "If Electronic Arts reckon this is the cutting edge of interactive experiences, then they can keep it," he writes.

GOTM: *Pacific Strike*. "The first game I've seen to fully combine the grip of a flight simulation with the immediacy and adrenaline rush of a good blaster."

Also Recommended: *Piquin: Ultima VIII*, *The Elder Scrolls: Arena*, *Fleet Defender*, *SSN-21*, *SeaWolf*

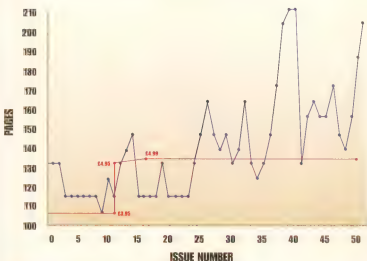


Issue 4

The now notorious "Best PC game ever" *SimCity 2000* issue, the target of much revisionist re-historing by successive PCG Editors. We've often been asked how come *SimCity 2000*, which we

INCREASINGLY PORKY

Like a gluttonous man trapped in a roomful of lard, PC GAMER has become increasingly porky over the years, with more and more games worthy of attention, more and more old games requiring tipping, and more and more new games on the horizon. Our page count has risen accordingly, but you'll notice that, apart from the £1 increase for the CD edition, and a later 4p rise to bring us in line with other Future magazines, the price has remained remarkably stable. Isn't that great?



TOP 10 BEST COMPETITION TITLES

- The "Eurch" Contest
- The "Head-kicking" Contest
- The "I Just Wondered If I Could Borrow Some Coffee" Contest
- The "Bedroom Infiltration" Contest
- The "Really Quite Difficult" Contest
- The "Ode to Ashley" Contest
- The "Unless I'm Very Mistaken" Contest
- The "Looks Like a Chicken" Contest
- The "My Girlfriend Is An Alien" Contest
- The "So Now What?" Contest

LOWEST-EVER PC GAMER REVIEW SCORES

- Plumbers Don't Wear Ties 3%
- Willow And Wicket 3%
- Bravo Romeo Delta 3%
- Golden Games 4%
- Expect No Mercy 4%
- Arcade Mania 5%
- International Sports Challenge 5%
- Subversion 6%
- Pinball 3D-VCR 7%

MATT BIELBY

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

"Just round the corner actually, being Assistant Publisher of JET and PC Plus. After I might add, a hugely successful time launching Future's ace Total Film magazine. And SFX, since you mention it. Oh, and... and... (Oh, do shut up... -fun.)"



THE TEAM CELEBRATES CIRCULATION FIGURE VICTORY

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

You know those big words we print as headings to game reviews? Well, the theory is that they should reflect on both the subject matter of the game and its quality. Here are our favourites...

- Enterprising (Star Trek: Judgement Rites)
- Luke-Warm (Rebel Assault)
- Ace (Evasive Action)
- Nebulous (Starlord)
- Weedy (The Lawnmower Man)
- Sublime (SSN-21 Seawolf)
- Seddy (Plumbers Don't Wear Ties CD)
- Rugged (Magic Carpet)
- Tyred (Cyclemania)
- Primitive (BC Racers)
- Engaging (Star Trek TNG: A Final Unity)
- Possible (Rugby World Cup 1995)
- Unenlightening (Darker)
- Threadbare (Magic Carpet 2)
- Spineless (Worms)
- Forced (Rebel Assault 2)
- Mystic (Zork Nemesis)
- Dated (Time Commando)
- Sleepy (Z)
- Rocking (Quake)
- Shameless (Crusader: No Regret)
- Dim (Lighthouse)
- Spiritless (Realms Of The Haunting)
- Catchy (Trophy Bass 2)
- Better (Throne Hospital)
- Smashing (Tennis Elbow)
- Pucka (NHL 98)



Issue 10

First pictures of the epoch-defining *Doom II* dominate the news section, while a massive preview of the outrageously hyped *Rise Of The Robots* manages to remain admirably level-headed. "I'm not really too sure what all the fuss is about," writes Gary Penn. Good man.

GOTM: *Microsoft Space Simulator*. "Successful, absorbing and a dream come true for anyone with more than a passing interest in man's final frontier."

Also Recommended: *International Tennis Open*, but everything was pretty rubbish this month.

Top Sellers: *SimCity 2000*, 1942: *The Pacific Air War*, *Cannon Fodder*

Cables: "The industry insists on increasing the clock speeds of its processors. What next? A 200MHz machine? To my mind, the Power PC, which was launched recently, is the way forward."



Issue 12

If you've still got a CD version of this issue, get out the disc and re-install *SkyRoads* - one of the simplest, slickest and best shareware games we've ever featured. Go on - for old times' sake.

GOTM: *Colonisation*. "So picked with clever ideas and concepts that it's a joy to play, and I'd recommend it to any PC games player."

Also Recommended: *Dawn Patrol*, *Warcraft: Orcs And Humans*, *Alone In The Dark 2 CD*

Top Sellers: *TIE Fighter*, *Lemmings 2: The Tribes*, *Theme Park*

Cables: "Why? Tell me why? PC GAMER was the first magazine which fitted into my backpack without forcing it. And now with this bigger-sized magazine I have to force it into my backpack."

WORLD DOMINATION: A GRAPH

Snowball-like, our band of acolytes has grown in size unstoppably throughout the years, and PC GAMER quickly became the UK's biggest-selling PC games magazine. The full story's told by our escalating ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation) figures:



IT'S NOT AN ISSUE OF PC GAMER WITHOUT...

- A photograph of Peter Molyneux
- "The best flight sim ever"
- A letter complaining about all the letters from Loughborough
- A Star Wars or Star Trek game
- The words "er something" in a review
- Preview pictures of *Lands Of Lore II*
- News of a hardware development guaranteed to make your system obsolete
- At least two references to *The Secret Of Monkey Island*
- At least eight references to *Quake*

HIGHEST-EVER PC GAMER REVIEW SCORES

(COMPILATIONS AND ANTHOLOGIES EXCLUDED)

Civilization II 96%	Dungeon Keeper 95%
C&C: Red Alert 95%	F22 ADF 95%
Quake 95%	Theme Park 95%
Doom II 95%	Wing Commander III 95%
X-Wing vs TIE Fighter 95%	TIE Fighter 94%



GARY WHITTA



WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

"Currently presiding over the golden age of PC GAMER US. In San Francisco, thanks for asking."

THE BEST FLIGHT SIM EVER: A BRIEF HISTORY

Tornado Issue 5: "The best example of the genre."
 Fleet Defender Issue 6: "The best modern air-to-air combat sim."
 1942: The Pacific Air War Issue 7: "The most complete flight sim package ever."
 Overlord Issue 8: "Easily the best PC flight simulation you can buy."
 Dawn Patrol Issue 13: "A flight sim that's head and shoulders above the rest."
 Flight Unlimited Issue 16: "The most complete flight simulation ever."
 Top Gun: Fire At Will Issue 28: "Could easily become my favourite flight sim."
 EF2000 Issue 31: "As perfect a flight sim as you'll ever find."
 Flying Corps Issue 40: "The best flight sim ever."
 F22 Air Dominance Fighter Issue 49: "The best flight sim ever!"



Issue 13



Issue 14

Ah yes. The famous *Creation* cover. A five-page feature marking the beginning of the 'Creation Diary', as Bullfrog's programmers struggle to complete their "latest masterpiece". A masterpiece that the world

is, still, years later, waiting for...
 GOTM: *NASCAR Racing*. "Any simulation which allows you to paint a fat hairy arse on the rear of your car can't be all bad."

Also Recommended: *Metaltech: Earthings*, *All New World of Lemmings*, *Kyrandia 3: Malcolm's Revenge*

Top Sellers: *Doom II*, *SimCity 2000*, *Colonization*
 Cables: Unfortunately, all the letters were boring this month.



Issue 15



Issue 16

The one where Gary wears Mark Hamill's *Wing Commander III* uniform and salutes - a picture so 'good' we printed it three times. Shudder.

GOTM: *Flight Unlimited*.

"Stunning photo-realistic graphics and staggering attention to detail" if you have a plush Pentium. Or, "if you have a bog

standard 486", "runs like a tortoise".

Also Recommended: *Discworld, Ascendancy, Commander Blood, Psycho Pinball, King's Quest VII*

Top Sellers: *Mortal Kombat, Winter Olympics, SimCity 2000*

Cables: A real slack period for interesting letters, this.



Issue 7



Issue 10

Gary Whitta uses his last month as Editor of PC GAMER to jet over to LucasArts in San Francisco, where he reviews *Full Throttle*, then down to Interplay in San Diego for a look at *Dungeon Master 2*. Freebies

accomplished, he then nicks off to launch a new 'top secret' magazine... which will subsequently turn out to be *Total Football*.

GOTM: *Full Throttle*. "It must be extremely frustrating for rival adventure developers as they attempt to play catch-up, but LucasArts leave them further behind with each new game."

Also Recommended: *Bioforge, Pyrotechnica, Frontier: First Encounters, Super Street Fighter II Turbo, Rempage: Battle For Jacob's Star, Unnecessary Roughness 95*

Top Sellers: *SimCity 2000, Overlord, Premier Manager 3*

Cables: "I've got a 486SX/25 and..." oh, you know the rest.



Issue 22



Issue 20

Oops! Turns out the on-the-shelf version of *Frontier: First Encounters* is riddled with bugs. We run an in-depth feature listing 18 serious problems, from "saved games don't always reload" to "planets disappear". "We

reviewed a perfectly playable version of *First Encounters* and enjoyed it immensely," writes the Editor. "Someone clearly screwed up somewhere, but no-one's prepared to point the finger. A sinister cover-up would appear to be in operation." Programmer David Braben is apparently "on holiday".

GOTM: *Command & Conquer*. "A superb game in almost every respect."

Also Recommended: *Terminal Velocity, Micro Machines 2, FX Fighter, Civil War, Perfect General 2*

Top Sellers: *Ultimate Soccer Manager, SimCity 2000, SimTower*

Cables: "What would they call it if they released a multi-player version of *Alone In The Dark*?"



Issue 18



Issue 23



Issue 24

The afterbooks from Issue 23's no-holds-barred reviews earthquake begin to reverberate, with Bullfrog's Cathy Campos at the head of a publisher-led backlash. "I was astonished to discover that *Magic Carpet 2* had received a

review score of just 41%, considering that every other games magazine in the UK has given it scores between 80 and 93%," she writes. "I don't give a toss what 'every other games magazine' thinks," Stuart Campbell replies. "I'm genuinely sorry that *Magic Carpet 2* is crap, and I'm sorry I had to write the review I did. But it's my job." **GOTM:** *Hexen*. "It's beyond *Heretic*, beyond *Doom*, beyond *Doom II* and, hey, beyond any other 3D action game you can currently get your hands on. Buy it!"

Also Recommended: *EF2000, Navy Strike, Wipeout, NBA Jam: Tournament Edition, Screamers*

Top Sellers: *Command & Conquer, Championship Manager 2, Phantasmagoria*

Cables: "Has anyone got a cure for cramp? I usually get it in my legs when I've got them up while spending many hours on my computer."



Issue 22

A mammoth, and deeply special, supplement on games being developed in the USA graces the cover of this month's issue. Jonathan describes it as "Surely the finest freebie given away by any magazine in living

memory, providing an invaluable insight into the workings of the American games industry, as well as an invaluable holiday for us."

GOTM: *Fade To Black*. "Better than lying on the rug in my bedroom just as the evening sun begins to flood in through the ten-foot-high window, and listening to Roger Whittaker singing The Last Farewell really loudly."

Also Recommended: *Lemmings 3D, Ascendancy*

Top Sellers: *SimCity 2000, X-Wing Collector's CD, Doom II*



Issue 21

PC GAMER IN A DAY

You remember David Attenborough striding across the beach at the beginning of *Life On Earth*, telling the story of the earth? "If we condensed the entire history of the world into one day," he said, or words to that effect, "then man would appear at two minutes to midnight."

If, for some mad reason, you were to play the same time-shifting game with the history of PCG, the tale you'd tell would go something like this

- 00:01 **PC GAMER** born. Universal rejoicing
- 01:30 First Pentium chips appear
- 05:30 First CD GAMER
- 08:00 **PC GAMER** Web pages go on-line – the Internet is upon us
- 10:00 *Command & Conquer* reviewed
- 11:30 Windows 95 launched
- 12:00 We stop putting 'CD' next to CD releases in reviews, as almost everything is
- 12:30 First adverts for *Dungeon Keeper* appear
- 13:00 First 3D accelerator card-only game (*Virtua Fighter Remix*)
- 13:30 First letter printed from Loughborough
- 14:00 Netware section begins – the Internet comes of age
- 14:30 *Quake* demo
- 15:00 Second wave of increasingly desperate *Dungeon Keeper* ad campaign
- 17:30 Full version of *Quake* reviewed
- 18:30 *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* reviewed
- 22:00 *Dungeon Keeper* finally released
- 23:30 *Total Annihilation* – finally, a game better than *Red Alert*

By this reckoning, Matt Bielby was a mere part-time chairwife; Gary ran the night shift, vacating the Editor's chair by breakfast; Jonathan Davies put in a full working day 9:30-18:30; and Matt Pierce turned up at nine in the evening.



MI: Missing in Inaction

It'll be ready by June. No, wait... July. Oh, hang on, we're just ironing out the last few bugs – September. Definitely Christmas. We're just updating the graphics routines to take advantage of 3Dfx – it'll be ready early next year. Next summer, maybe? E...? Um...? (Dies.)

Issue 1: *Hunters Of Rokk*, a fantasy role-player from Gary Gygax and Cyberdreams.

Issue 2: *Liberation: Captive 2*, a CD32 hit from Mindscape.

Issue 4: "This is real state-of-the-art stuff and promises to be a stunner when it's released, probably in 1995" we said of *Star Fleet Academy* after a CES demo. Appearing this month it seems slightly less



Issue 26

Hilariously, we list estimated release dates for upcoming games, including:

Creation: Summer '96
Urban Decay: Summer '96
Into The Shadow: February '96

Heart Of Darkness: April '96

All of these titles, sadly, are yet to appear. GOTM: *Terminator: Future Shock*. "BUDDA!! BUDDA!! BUDDA!!" Whir-click-stomp. Stomp.

Also Recommended: *Timpest 2000*, *Pro Pinball: The Web*, *Virtua Fighter Remix*, *Manic Karts*, *IndyCar 2*, *TIE Fighter Collector's CD*
 Top Sellers: *Screamers*, *FIFA Soccer 96*, *TFX: F43000*

Cables: Busloads of readers join in the review score debate. "Who do they think they are, complaining about bad reviews? Perhaps they ought to try producing decent games," writes one. "As for complaining about *Phantasmagoria 2* receiving only 12%, has he played it? I have, and the entire game took me all of four hours to complete. And I stopped for my tea," said another. "I ignored your 49% review of *Championship Manager 2* and bought the bloody thing. It's shite!" swears a third.



Issue 27



Nova revealed for the first time, and the caption "East kaboom, Johnny Badman" appearing on page 100, there's a pretty great magazine attached to it, too.

GOTM: *Civilization II*.

"Even after four years, no strategy game has come close to *Civilization*. And now it's twice as good."

Also Recommended: *Top Gun: Fire At Will*, *Earthlight 2*, *Rayman*, *Microsoft Golf 2*

Top Sellers: *Command & Conquer*, *Screamers*, *Rebel Assault 2*

Cables: "DES O'CONNOR KNOWS WHO YOU ARE. YOU ARE SAFE." Phew, eh!



Issue 29



Issue 30



An issue where the Game Of The Month scores less than 90%, and with only one other title worthy of recommendation, which we'll put down to a post-Christmas slack period, or something. *Afterlife*, on the



cover, only gets 84%. *Normality* gets 87%.



GOTM: *Normality Inc.* "The first leap into a whole new world of adventure game style."



Also Recommended: *Virtual Snooker*



Top Sellers: *Civilization II*, *Command & Conquer: Covert Operations*, *Command & Conquer*



Cables: "Even as I type, I can feel the minions of THE DARK ONE circling above your posy abode in East Preston." The Loughborough nightmare gathers speed.



Issue 28



A whopping seven entirely exclusive demos – including *Command & Conquer*, *Rebel Assault 2*, *Warcraft II* and *Earthlight 2* – make this month's CD GAMER duly worthy of the massive flash pointing at it and yelling "BEST CD EVER!"



And with Sid Meier chatting about *Civ II*, Peter Molyneux under fire in *The Hot Spot*, *Terra*



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Who's the DEADLIEST of them all?

"Blizzard are not settling for Warcraft in space...with Starcraft they're aiming for a truly stellar game."

PC Gamer

"...Starcraft will represent a benchmark in real-time strategy games."

PC Zone

3 Epic Chapters

Three separate storylines intertwine within 30 scenarios to tell the epic saga of a universe on the brink of destruction

3 Theatres of Battle

A deadly mix of space combat, planetary assault and covert base infiltration

3 Alien Races

Command any of three alien races - each boasting a unique set of skills and abilities



cutting-edge. But at least it finally made it out, unlike (thank God) Gametek's *Beverly Hills* game, of which we had one execrable-looking screenshot in the news section.

"It's interesting to see that 3DO have signed a deal with Creative Technology Ltd to jointly develop a 3DO-compatible PC card. Once plugged in, this will enable you to play any 3DO title on your PC."

Something which no-one, it turned out, wanted to do.

"You think the screenshots of *Lands Of Lore II* are impressive? You should see them move." And we're still waiting for that privilege.

Mike Singleton's Opera-based role-player *Nibelung's Ring*, canned by Psygnosis.

"Sega are converting several of their mega CD titles to PC CD-ROM... frontrunners are the ever-so-slightly controversial *Night Trap*, its sequel *Double Switch* and the shoot-'em-up *Silpheed*..." and Sega saved themselves much embarrassment when they decided not to release any of 'em.

The Doom movie.

King Of Thieves, an action/strategy title from Team 17.

Tir na Nog, a never-to-appear updating of the long-lost ZX Spectrum "legend".

Calia 2095, a rather superb-looking cartoon Doom-style game from LucasArts. Issue 21 promised, in August 1995, that it'd be out in time for Christmas. Looks like it's been shelved, sadly.

Into The Shadows - Scavenger's SVGA beat-'em-up-cum-adventure. "Looking ridiculously good," we claimed. Now (sadly) dead as a doornail, of course.

Synergist: Pinball experts 21st Century's attempt to produce a non-pinball game - a "multimedia graphic adventure" - proved too much for them.

A game based on the Hellraiser film, promising "All the terror of the movie, brought to you in full 360-degree interactivity." Luckily, we've never had to find out what that actually meant.

InCyberia, a 'virtual reality' game from Germany. With knights.

Superheroes, an X-COM-style game from MicroProse. With superheroes.

Dreadnought, a 'steampunk' Wing Commander-style game from Tribe, said to have been appearing around the end of July '96, but still missing, along with Tribe's other mooted release *Zoiks* (with Fred Flintstone and Scooby Doo).

The sequel to Infocom text adventures *Planetfall* and *Stationfall*, provisionally called *Planetfall*. Silence from Activision for more than a year now.

"GT confidently predict a December 1996 release for *SPQR*." But "Myst in togas" remains elusive; so much for "confidence".

Almost all the games in our '1997 preview' feature remain mere ghosts. To list anything talked about since then is merely to tempt fate.



Issue 32

The slack period, or something, goes beyond a joke. *Space Hulk 2* scoops 86%, and nothing else is even in contention. Reader backlash to our Top 100 dominates Cables, with most commentators complaining

about the inclusion of *Quake Test*, an incomplete game. (But as we later respond: "Nobody denounces five-a-side football as incomplete just because it doesn't have all the features of the full game. Like offside, for instance.") And there's the predictable "Where is *Rebel Assault*?" whining, too.

GOTM: *Space Hulk 2*. "Stomach-knotting tension and blasting kicks aplenty."

Also Recommended: No other games were worthy of recommendation this month.

Top Sellers: *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Civilization II*, *Theme Park*

Cables: "You claimed that you get several billion telephone calls a day asking about *GP2*. I have done some calculations, and the results are staggering." More tedious pedantry from the increasingly irritating Adam Roper of - you guessed it - Loughborough.



Issue 34

Yes - *FGP* is finally out. Et... Cough. Anyway, this issue is possibly most notable for its ego-pricking 'How Hard Can It Be!' feature, in which the PCG team-members try to create their own games, and employ freelancer Danny

Wallace to review their efforts. The result? Scores of 4%, 6%, 6%, 6%, 7% and 8%, along with some huffy-puffy responses from the designers. Mark Donald's angry letter summed up the mood pretty well: "We wish to protest in the strongest possible terms about your treatment of *Eco Warrior*... you can forget about an exclusive on *Eco Warrior 2*."

GOTM: *Links LS*. "Shockingly good and eminently purchasable."

Also Recommended: *Mission Force: Cyberstorm*. Top Sellers: *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Theme Park*, *The Settlers 2*

Cables: "Do you have anything against me? I've sent you many e-mails and never seen any of them in your mag! Instead I see every issue one or two letters from Adam Roper from Loughborough."



Issue 36

Some very fine games are reviewed in this issue, and there's a superb *Screamers 2* demo on the CD, but everyone's interest is transfixed by one thing only: our in-depth look at... wait for it... *Civilization*.

Conquer: *Red Alert*. Needless to say, it looks stunning. Now if only we could get, say, an exclusive review for the next issue...

GOTM: *MechWarrior: Mercenaries*. "The definitive Mech all-rounder."

Also Recommended: *Screamers 2*, *Monster Truck Madness*, *SWIV 3D*

Top Sellers: *Quake*, *Grand Prix 2*, *Z*

Cables: "Beware! I suspect that David Whitely (who wrote a letter in PCG 85 complaining that it was unfair to ban letters from Loughborough) IS FROM LOUGHBOROUGH!"

Your back's against the wall,

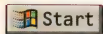
your butt's
getting burned,

the chips
are down

and you're almost
out of metaphors.

don't you wish you had a

faster joystick?



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KERMIT THE FROG REPLACES A SYSTEM BOARD

KICKING!

We live in an imperfect world. PC GAMER wishes it weren't, but... well, it is. So – as you may have noticed – not every game is perfect. And, regrettably, it is our duty to point out imperfections wherever we may find them. Inevitably, too, titles come our way so riddled with flaws, so lacking in redeeming qualities, that we feel it is nothing less than our duty to *heap scorn and ridicule upon them* LIKE SOME KILL-CRAZED DEMONIC EXECUTIONER. HA HA HA HA!

We like our reviews – they're the toughest you'll find. Here's why...

- "It must have taken ten minutes to design – and you'd be doing well if you were still playing it after half that time," Jonathan Davies on *Tesserae*, Issue 3.
- "Quite possibly the worst full-price game of '93." Andy Butcher on *Speed Racer*, Issue 1.
- "Hits the box. Lows: The game inside the box." Brian Walker on *Heirs To The Throne*, Issue 3.
- "You could squint; you could turn the monitor upside down then on its side; you could even wear a cheap pair of sunglasses with red lenses. But whichever way you look at it, *Jonny Quest* is bad. Very bad. In fact," Gary Penn on *Jonny Quest*, Issue 4.
- "Not even Norman Wisdom could have made a clumsier job of this game." Gary Penn on *Theatre Of Death*, Issue 8.
- "About as close to being a decent beat-'em-up as *Theme Park*." Chris Buxton on the alleged beat-'em-up *Metal & Lace*, Issue 9.
- "There's nothing like a good CD-ROM game... and this is NOTHING like a good CD-ROM game! Boom boom! Etc." Andy Dyer on *Jump Raven*, Issue 11.
- "If the developers wanted a urine sample, all they had to do was ask." Gary Penn on *Under A Killing Moon*, Issue 14.
- "There is no God." Gary Penn on *Hell*, Issue 16.
- "Astoundingly dreadful. American Laser Games should be burned to the ground." Jonathan Nash on *The Last Bounty Hunter*, Issue 22.
- "It's a shame there isn't a demo mode, so you could be spared the tedious business of actually having to play it at all." Stuart Campbell on (ooh, controversial!) *Magic Carpet 2*, Issue 23.
- "A perversely original idea destroyed as if with a claw hammer wielded clumsily by a fiend unresponsive to electric shocks at scientifically set levels because it is THE WORLD'S MOST BORING GAME." Jonathan Nash on *Bravo Romeo Delta*, Issue 23.
- "A shatteringly abysmal game beribboned and prettied with THE TEASING RAIMENT OF THE DARK ONE." Jonathan Nash (again) on *Battle Beast*, Issue 23.
- "It smells like a wet dog on a hot day." Stuart Campbell on *Alien Odyssey*, Issue 24.
- "The more I played it the worse it got, until I was

JONATHAN DAVIES

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?



Unfortunately, Jonathan is not permitted to reply. He's working as Editor of N64 Magazine, you see, and a recent Future ruling states that the Editor of any magazine which "goes late" is not allowed to write for any other title.

no longer able to type its name at the DOS prompt." Jonathan Davies on *TekWar*, Issue 26.

- "I can only hope that one day humanity will be set free from stinking trout like this." Tim Cant on *Psychic Detective*, Issue 30.
- "Do anything – anything – except buy this game. And if you do buy it, don't play it. Worse than you could ever imagine. Worse than you could ever imagine imagining, for that matter." Jon Smith on *Mirage*, Issue 32.
- "A teetery, tottery, typically trashy example of the kind of game you can only achieve through a careful combination of laziness and lack of any visible talent." Danny Wallace – heretically – on Jonathan Davies' *Real-Time Snail Wars*, created by the Editor as part of our 'How Hard Can It Be?' feature. Needless to say, he never wrote for us again until the Editorship changed hands.
- "It must be really annoying for publishers to hear how their latest point-and-click adventure isn't as good as *Monkey Island*, which is five years old. Perhaps almost as annoying as being sold a point-and-click adventure that isn't as good as *Monkey Island*, which is five years old. For example." Jonathan Nash on *The Gene Machine*, Issue 36.
- "No game has ever brought me quite as close to killing myself as *The Neverhood*." Jonathan Davies on – ugh! – *The Neverhood*.
- "Quite possibly the worst football game on the PC in the history of all things ever. Ever." Steve Owen on *Microsoft Soccer*, Issue 37.
- "*Star Control 3*, from the very first instant you try to play it to the moment, a little while after, when you shatter the disc into small pieces and nail them above your door as a warning to others, is clearly so unremittably poor than degrees of failure aren't really an issue." Jon Smith on *Star Control 3*, Issue 38.
- "A pointless mountain of toss." Danny Wallace – re-incorporated into the PCG crew after Jonathan's departure – on *Leisure Suit Larry 7*, Issue 39.
- "A shiny bunch of tedious arse." Steve Owen on *Uncle Henry's MindBlower*, Issue 46.
- "One of the most misguided, throat-slashing-tedious games we've ever had the misfortune to play." Richard Longhurst on *Galapagos*, Issue 49.



JONATHAN DAVIES AS THE EMPEROR



ISSUE 37



Issue 38

Tomb Raider scorches in after last month's *Red Alert*, to make it, truly, a Christmas to remember. Our unbounded yuletide joy is only, er, bounded by the fact that this is

Jonathan's last issue as Editor. Tearfully, he leaves to launch N64 magazine, and say "farewell" to Fatal Exception Errors and sound card compatibility problems. GOTM: *Tomb Raider*. "Original, exciting, sweaty, sassy and good old-fashioned value for money."

Also Recommended: *Fragile Allegiance*, *Tunnel B1*, *Discworld 2*
Top Sellers: *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*, *FIFA 97*, *Screamers 2*
Cables: "Did anyone else notice that the sound effects in *Neverwhere* were ripped off from *Magic Carpet*?"



ISSUE 39

Issue 40

We've never mentioned our Guidelines sections in all these issue synopses, you know – mainly because they're self-contained and not time-representative. But let's take a moment, now, to



laud their unerring usefulness. This month, for example, there's Andy Butcher's indispensably detailed *Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall* guide, along with some rather groovy *Championship Manager 2* tactical analysis and a delightful *Ducworld 2*

solution. Typically fab. Guidelines, we salute you. GOTM: *Flying Corps*. "One of the finest simulators ever created."

Also Recommended: *Heroes Of Might And Magic 2*, *KKND*, *Scorch*

Top Sellers: *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*, *FIFA 97*, *Microsoft Flight Simulator for Windows 95*

Cables: "All these years I kept asking myself one question. Why does DOS never say: 'EXCELLENT command or filename?'"



laughing at the cover, "Dungeon Keeper - world exclusive review!" And so, incredibly, it is. More than a year and a half after the first adverts appeared for the game. It is finally ready for inspection. And, after all that time, it actually turns out to be rather fab.



Issue 44

GOTM: *Dungeon Keeper*. "A stunning achievement." (Hang on - wasn't that *Red Alert*!) Also Recommended: *Carmageddon*, *Formula One*, *Sierra Sports: Golf*

Top Sellers: *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*, *Theme Hospital*, *Die Hard Trilogy*
Cables: "I wash cars to afford PCG. Thirteen cars per issue."



Issue 45

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Issue 47

Alb! ha! The now-customary Readers Top 100 issue. It is an exceptionally close battle at the top of the tree, with a few final votes deciding the ultimate placings. And, as it turns out, *C&C: Red Alert* strut their all-outstanding popularity once

more, with *Quake*, then the *Civilization*, trailing dutifully behind them.

GOTM: *Dark Reign*. "Sets a new standard in strategy game presentation, bug-free operation and smooth running."

Also Recommended: *Warlord III*, *Timesuck*, *Conan*

Top Sellers: *Dungeon Keeper*, *FIFA Soccer Manager*, *Guns n' Garters*

Cables: "I'm sort of a 'computer freak'."



Issue 48

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Issue 49

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Also Recommended: *Kick Off 97*, *Theme Hospital*

Top Sellers: *MDK*, *Die Hard Trilogy*, *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*

Cables: "I say bring back The Hot Spot and bring back irrelevant letters." Like they ever went away.



Issue 50

3D's coaxes of age, dominating the Electronic Entertainment Expo show. "Virtually every PC game is running on a 3Dfx card," reports James. And the cover game! Activision's follow-up to its *MeikWarrior* series, *Heavy Gear*, full of polygons that are looking luscious on a 3Dfx PC. As if to prove the point.

GOTM: *X-COM: Apocalypse*. "A perfect example of what a sequel should be - something that takes all that was good about the original, fixes what was bad, then improves upon it in almost every way."

Also Recommended: Oddly, it was another of those 'nothing else worthy of recommendation' months

Top Sellers: *Dungeon Keeper*, *FIFA Soccer Manager*, *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*

Cables: "I don't quite understand the running joke about letters from Loughborough. I would be very grateful if you could explain how the whole business started."



Issue 51

Four years later, here we are. From a mewling babe, games-wise, with only a couple of allegedly humorous cartoon adventure games to recommend it, the PC has turned into a world best-selling tiger. Flight sim?

The finest the world has ever seen. 3D shoot-'em-up. Sorted. Beat 'em-up? No problem. Adventure? Easy. Futuristic combat simulator? You should see it. Strategy game? We invented the things. Sports game? In our sleep. 3D action/adventure? Piece of cake. Eight stunning camps win awards in Issue 49, each proving the PC's accomplishment in every imaginable game genre. Crises.

GOTM: *F22 Air Dominance Fighter*. "Huge. Frightening. Involving. Satisfying. Difficult. Stunning. Important."

Also Recommended: *Hessen II*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Broken Sword 2*, *1-Win*, *Close Combat 2*, *Tasks LS*

Top Sellers: *Microsoft Flight Simulator 98*, *Hessen II*, *Total Annihilation*

Cables: "I'd be happy if other readers could share their opinion on this new trend."



Issue 52

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People love to bang on about the good old days.

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Defining videogame moments

Part five: The shoot-'em-up

When faced with a fleet of alien spacecraft intent on invasion, the most sensible course is obviously to send in a lone fighter on a suicide mission. Which is why, in the year 2023, we'll all be speaking Xvv'tgnqian.

1. Space Invaders

Alternatively known as "The game that single-handedly turned arcade games from a minority pastime into a global obsession. Especially in Japan." *Space Invaders* was perfect for the time. While everyone else was finding new and exciting twists on *Pong*-style games, Taito developed a monster. It had everything – alien hordes on an inevitable downward course, a lone gun emplacement with which to kill them, bunkers to hide under, and even a flying saucer to shoot for bonus points. All in glorious monochrome.

2. Galaxians

The trouble with those *Space Invaders* was that they never

Capcom, who dragged the shoot-'em-up down to earth and replaced the spaceships with soldiers. The premise remained the same – shoot everything in sight – but *Commando*'s ground-based action and its clever use of terrain, with hills to go around and bridges to pass underneath, made it an instant classic.

5. Nemesis

Of course, our love affair with space action hadn't completely died. It merely needed spicing up a bit, and *Nemesis* provided all the necessary condiments. It introduced the concept of power-ups, enabling you to soup up your fighter while on the move, and gave the look of the shoot-



"*Nemesis* introduced the concept of power-ups, enabling you to soup up your fighter while on the move, and gave the look of the shoot-'em-up a sorely-needed spit and polish."

broke rank, which made picking them off a little too easy, predictable even. But then they were superseded by a deadlier breed, one that engaged in deep space, taunting hapless earthlings by staying at a distance until one or a group of them pecked off on a fast attack run, looping and wheeling and firing all the time, until you either shot them down or they ran away, back to the safety of a crowd.

3. Defender

But the *Galaxians* were jolly japesters compared to the Landers in *Defender*. Not only did they fire at you with pinpoint accuracy, but they got their kicks from kidnapping humans and merging with them to turn into super-scary mutants. Eugene Jarvis, creator of *Defender*, we salute you. Not only did he introduce more new gameplay elements into the shoot-'em-up than we can be bothered to count (sideways scrolling, full control over your ship, hyperspace, smart bombs – the list goes on), but he deviated from the norm of having just left, right and fire buttons. *Defender* boasted around eighty-two buttons, and still the punters loved it, even though they lasted an average seven seconds.

4. Commando

Years passed, everyone got sick of spaceships shooting other spaceships, and then the genre was re-invented by

'em-up a sorely needed spit and polish. You now went into battle against a backdrop of intricate alien planets, and just when you thought you'd finished a level, along came an enormous boss alien that took all the punishment you could mete out. The genre had found its new, true direction.

6. Space Harrier

There had been 3D shoot-'em-ups before, notably Buck Rogers in whatever century he'd foolishly catapulted himself into. But it wasn't until Sega's *Space Harrier* that the 3D look really gelled, with fast, solid graphics bolstered by the use of a hydraulic chair to make you feel sick as you swooped all over the place. Shame, then, that – hydraulic support and fancy visuals aside – *Space Harrier* was a routine and ultimately dull piece of combat.

7. Mad Dog McCree

Paving the way for the likes of *Virtua Cop* and every other half-decent game with a light gun stuck to the front, Atari's *Mad Dog* struck a fine balance between live action video and fancy shootin' action. A wild west theme, real human beings to shoot dead, hidden bonuses to pick off... Well worth the quid a shot they charged in most arcades. And yes, we know Taito's *Operation Wolf* did the light gun thing first, but *Mad Dog* pulled it into a whole new world.

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A Different World

Will this year's Christmas line-up compensate for the lack of hits throughout the year? Gary Whitta's still undecided, but at least there's *Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor*.

BY THE YEAR'S END, WILL WE LOOK BACK on 1997 as a good 'un or bad 'un for PC gamers? Well, I'm writing this mid-October and that question is still up in the air, surely not a good sign. Here in America, gamers are restless – where are all the cool games, they ask? We're asking the same thing. Looking back over a year of reviews in the American PC GAMER, I see a disturbing short fall of our coveted Editor's Choice awards – quite simply, very few games released so far this year have been worthy of such an accolade.

But, of course, the PC games market is not in decline, and we know there's plenty of cool stuff on the way – it's just that I'm getting a little impatient waiting for it. This

1997 malaise in the on-line business, which seems stronger than ever. Origin's standard-bearer *Ultima Online* finally came out of beta-test and landed on store shelves for real this month, marking a major milestone in the history of on-line gaming – the first, on-line only version of a major brand-name game from a major publisher. Unfortunately, Origin's rush to bring the product to market seems to have resulted in a final release that's still beset with bugs and other user-niling problems that have set the Usenet newsgroups alight. But did anybody really expect anything else? Who really thought that bringing big-name PC games to the Internet in such an ambitious way was going to be anything less than



"Westwood may have the right idea with *C&C: Sole Survivor*, a cute, arcade-based version of its immense real-time strategy game, in which up to 100 players can whizz around huge Internet maps in *C&C* vehicles killing each other in an attempt to be the last man standing."

year's E3 in Atlanta promised much, but virtually none of it has surfaced so far. The only real champion to date is LucasArts' *Jedi Knight*, which is the prize gem of our December issue (we would have reviewed it earlier, but unlike some magazines we preferred to wait for a finished copy), but the nearly finished copies of Sid Meier's *Gettysburg!*, *Blade Runner* and *Tomb Raider II* which landed on my desk just the other day are good indicators of a great Christmas in the works.

It looks like if anything's going to pull this year back from the brink, it'll be Christmas – aside from the games I have just mentioned, we also have *Quake II*, *Wing Commander: Prophecy*, *The Curse Of Monkey Island*, *Close Combat 2* and *Starcraft*, all due to debut in time for the silly season and perhaps make it one of the best ever. For now, we can but live in hope – every one of those games LOOKS great, but how many times have we been disappointed in the past? In the meantime, one aspect of gaming that doesn't seem to have been affected by this

tricky? It will take time for the technology to settle down and stabilise – but many are blaming Origin for trying something so ambitious as a first attempt.

Westwood may have something more along the lines of the right idea with *Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor*, a cute, arcade-based version of its immense real-time strategy game, in which up to 100 players can whizz around huge Internet maps in *C&C* vehicles picking up power-ups and bonuses and killing each other in an attempt to be the last man standing. We just received our first beta copies yesterday, and will be playing around with the 'closed' (i.e. not available to the general public yet) version currently being enjoyed by a couple of hundred Internet testers, and the Westwood team. So, you can expect a full report next month – that is, if I can drag myself away from the game long enough to write it...

● Gary Whitta's latest San Francisco escapade led to the destruction of one jetty and several minds.

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Ubi Soft
ENTERTAINMENT

In development

The final instalment of our epic and hugely popular *Monkey Island* diary is upon us. A massive thanks to all at LucasArts who contributed, and good luck with the game. Jonathan Ackley signs off.

THE LAST DAYS OF *THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND* are upon us. Even now, in the dark cellars of the building, burning goddesses Wendy Kaplan and Kellie Walker etch the final tracks of our game onto disc. And as I watch the last monkey on the LucasArts payroll leave the building (his name is Edgar and he fixed us tropical drinks for the duration of the project) I cannot help but reminisce about the last two years on the project.

It seems only yesterday that my co-project leader, Larry Ahern, and I slipped a half a cup of ground espresso beans into programmer Chris Purvis' Jolt cola. In my mind I can still see the poignant sight of young Chris in the

unit nurse, Mildred Cornhoople, and wisely decided to stay with the original number of dialog lines.

I've loved working on *The Curse Of Monkey Island*, but after working on a pirate game for... uh... for two years... I be glad ta... er... I'm glad to say that I... I... AAAAAARGH! I still be the same scurvy dog what's I were at the beginnin' o' this voyage! And now I be meanin' ta KILL YOU ALL!... Aargh! And what be more, I plans ta... Eh! What be ye doin'? GET THEE YER FILTHY HANDS OFFER ME! NO! LEMME GO! I'M A MIGHTY PIRATE! DO YE HEAR! A MIGHTY PIRATE!... AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

NOTE FROM LARRY AHERN: Jonathan Ackley is resting comfortably at the Happydale Home for Deranged



"In my mind I can still see the poignant sight of young Chris Purvis in the parking lot slamming into cars, trying to claw out his own eyes. Yes. When I am older, I will remember these as the good old days."

parking lot slamming into cars, trying to claw out his own eyes. Yes. When I am older, I will remember these as the good old days.

And I can remember when animator Anson Jew drew a scene of our villain LeChuck that was so scary, when I played it in our office Larry's pet lovebird 'Chirpy' had a heart-attack and dropped stone-cold dead on the floor of his cage. Oh, I had a good laugh at that one. I laughed and laughed. I think Larry thought it was funny too, but just didn't want to let on.

There were some tough times, too. I remember when our sound editors, Khris Brown, Coya Elliot and Cindy Wong, had edited all the 8,357 lines of dialog in the game flawlessly and in record time. Oifhandedly. I stated that the game might need 10,000 to 15,000 more lines just to give it that little, extra, added 'umph'.

Later that week I had the quiet time I needed to reflect on that idea. I took the advice of my intensive-care-

Project Leaders. Feel free to send cards and flowers, but please take care not to mention treasure maps, flintlock pistols or ill-gotten-swap.

● We'll be reviewing *The Curse Of Monkey Island* next month. Definitely. We know this because we already have the gold master of the game in our paws, ready to roll. However, there wasn't time to do it justice this month due to impending deadlines and some inclement weather that came out of nowhere. Well, it quite clearly came out of the sky but we didn't expect it. Anyway, Mr Ed Ricketts is already stroking his long and attractive beard back at his house while guaffing loudly. We thought it was quite amusing and Ed kindly concurs. So, next month, it is. The game's due for release during the third week of November, so if you're really keen you can buy it before the review comes out.



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Deeply offensive

I happened to buy PCG issue 44 in June for my family and I found the magazine interesting and helpful, while my young son has had a lot of fun from the demos. While violence is in the nature of many of the games, I found your treatment of that aspect quite okay, and the article on *Carnageddon* very balanced.

I therefore thought nothing about buying another issue for my son - issue 47, the September one. I am sorry to say that I found much of the content deeply offensive and was very upset that I had allowed such literature to come into my son's hands. I would like to list some of the things I found offensive. I realise that some are part of adverts, or

portray parts of games, but I would still hold you responsible for their inclusion in your magazine.

I am offended by the portrayal of females (Pg 3, 22, 23). I am offended by the misuse of Scripture and religious imagery (Pg 4, 14, 15) an advert for the same product in issue 44 I found okay (30, 64, 86). I am offended by the use of sexual innuendo (Pg 11, 60, 137). I am also offended by the image on Pg 13 and the language on Pg 43.

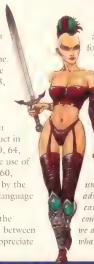
I can hardly believe the difference in presentation between the two issues. I would appreciate

your comments on the above and an indication of your editing policy for the future.

Joan R. Martin (Mrs), Kilsyth

We're sorry you found the content offensive. We are conscious of the power of language and imagery to offend and continually endeavour to remain within the commonly acknowledged, if subjective, boundaries of taste. Future

Publishing has in the past unilaterally altered or refused to print advertising it deemed offensive and has caused a significant amount of controversy in so doing. I suppose where we depart from you, Mrs Kilsyth, is in what we consider to be offensive. We



IN SHORT

You criticise people who like *Elite*.

Martin Smith, East Sussex

Never! *Elite* was the greatest ever single-player game. We embrace people who like *Elite* as our brothers. Metaphorically speaking.

I shall be arriving at Future Publishing on 5 November for tea, biscuits and a chat. I'll bring my own mug.

M. J. Phone, Loughborough

Security has been alerted.

How about giving us Thickies a better chance of understanding what we should be doing. J. Cleaver, Dorset

Understanding PCs is a black art. We suggest sacrificing a few fatted calves over your desk whenever you want to work.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

We've been stuck

I decided to try the *Resident Evil* demo on CD GAMER (PCG 48), only to discover that seeing as how I didn't have a 3Dfx card (having only a PowerVR instead, have you heard of them? Apparently not) I couldn't play the game at all, one of the main reasons I bought your mag in the first place. Considering the game is one of the more hyped PowerVR Extreme games, I was more than a little surprised by this...

Until I opened the magazine to be greeted by "FREE 3Dfx cards here! Now!" along with a severe plug for 3Dfx. Then another on your Open Arcade Architecture: "3Dfx go there first!" And again in *Quake II*: essential... hardware... 3Dfx. This is at its most blatant in reviews; the only accelerator mentioned is 3Dfx. I, like many other people who buy your mag, do not own a 3Dfx card (despite your best efforts to indoctrinate us).

Videologic saw the problems with their card, which is why they revamped it and made it a true competitor to any 3Dfx-based machine. I think this is important. Competition drives the market and we, the people, see the benefits. We've been stuck with VHS for nearly 25 years. This is what happens when you take away competition and allow market dominance. A market as fast-moving as the 3D PC should have room for two or more 'standards'.

Ultimately what I'm trying to say is don't carry away on your crusade for 3Dfx. This kind of biased journalism is unforgivable.

David Fallaha, Londonderry

*You're right, it would be unforgivable if we were the brain-washing 3Dfx propagandists you brand us as. The critical point, you make yourself, is that the market is fast-moving. We're knee deep in new cards, price-points and compatibility concerns. People are confused. Many people don't know what to buy or when - the perennial PC quandary. So, in an effort to be of some little service to our readers, we're trying to advise them in making an informed choice. We've consistently stated that technologically the PowerVR chipset is peerless (see the 3D card feature in PCG 47). But the decisive factor is game support, and Power VR lags behind 3Dfx; the *Resident Evil* demo, and final retail version, abundantly proving the point. That's why we backed 3Dfx as a short-term certainty and PowerVR as a good long-term bet. As for the reviews, most 3D games are currently dedicated only to 3Dfx and the comps is just a bit of fun; examine the PowerVR one fully three months before (PCG 45). Moreover, new PowerVR patches are slapped on our disc whenever Videologic update their site. Check out this month's selection. All we're guilty of is stating our opinion. Our opinion is based on current events, and, as they change, so will our opinion. Turn to page 64 for the latest news.*

IN SHORT

Twenty minutes of Quake's gameplay as it took for my head to pound and my stomach to churn.

M. Moss, Dabdy

I know, it's great isn't it?

I can write a damned sight better when I don't have to take out all the jokes.

B. Jakes, Loughborough

Evidently not a single plucky joke escapes your ruthless censorship.

If you don't publish all of this letter I will send the boys round (and start buying PC Power Gulp).

Simon Allgrove, West Sussex

You rash young fool.

I'm creating a homepage and I was wondering if I could use your reviews and cheats in my homepage (I'll give you some credit). PS. If you don't reply, I'll take that as a yes.

PPS. I won't take no for an answer.

Leon Kenith, Norway

So you'll use our reviews and give us a bit of credit? Thanks. Thank very much. But, no.

My sweaty palms, dry throat and twitching index finger are the only indicators to the masses around me.

Steve Barham, Near your offices

What a beautiful image.

did not judge Issue 47 to be significantly more gratuitous than Issue 44, and we believe the content you highlight to be a reflection of values commonly held in the world in which we all live. We have not received any other complaints about the magazine's content from over 60,000 readers; indeed, many compare our stance favourably with our competitors. Hopefully, then, we're getting the balance about right.

Mr Average

Having read the review of *Total Annihilation* in your October edition, I went out and purchased said game. I have to agree with the review, "Total



Annihilation WILL erase *Red Alert* from your memory." However, having bought the game, I realised the influence PC GAMER and other magazines have on the public. A thought sprung to mind, what would be the effect on your reviews if undue pressure was placed on you by games publishers, or if your reviewer did not like a particular genre? With this in mind, may I make a suggestion: that you have a panel of subscribers who give their views to help you review your

'Games Of The Month'. This would give a more general impression of the games, so the overall results and opinions would match more closely that of Mr Average games player.

Graham Pugh, address tragically lost in a pioneering paper aeroplane flight

You'd have us all out of a job, Graham. How would our 'experts' earn their crust if you were doing all the reviewing for yourselves? Vested interests aside, we do our best to take the relevant factors into account. Reviewers' likes are carefully matched to the appropriate genre, to avoid embarrassing "it's a flight sim - what tax" type scenarios and thoughts of the game's intended audience are almost in our minds as we sweat blood over the score. You're absolutely right that one opinion is not necessarily more valid than any other but, if we canvassed enough people, doubtless we'd find one pervert who enjoyed *The Neverhood*. We don't expect you to trust us first time, like we don't expect you to jump straight into a stranger's car on the promise of Dolly Mixture, but we hope that over the months we'd become a valued games advisor you could turn to in times of need. That's why we don't bow to pressure from games publishers. Trust is hard won but easily lost. We receive quite a few letters on this subject and they almost invariably start with "I thoroughly agreed with your review but...", which suggests the current system is working for you.

Semi-freed from English

We have finally been semi-freed from English bias yet we are still shunned in games. Eidos' *CM2* and EA's *FIFA Manager* are the only games where you can control a Scottish team. So get more Scottish games out.

David Muir, Monifieth

Blade Runner preview

Is anyone else able to read the *Blade Runner* preview or is it just me who can't read white on white?

Gareth West, Barnet

We apologise unreservedly for the retina-hostile print in the *Blade Runner* feature. Unfortunately the wrong background ink was used during the printing process (the picture below shows what it should have looked like), and by the time we discovered the error it was too late. We are personally distraught because it's an excellent feature, but hopefully it won't happen again as all those responsible have been dealt with.



Very much a member

I am addicted to computer games, but does that really make me a 'computer geek'? My motive for playing is escapism. This is something everybody must be able to relate to. Film offers the common man a glimpse of an unattainable fantasy world, and literature enables the mind's eye to build a universe, unique to each individual.

Some computer games draw upon the best qualities of both to create, I believe, the ultimate fantasy. A fantastic, imaginary world of sights and sounds which can be interacted with directly. It is the most accessible alternative universe for the masses except, perhaps, drinking oneself into oblivion. I'm sure most people would agree life is what you make it. Travel, dangerous sports, sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll expand your horizons. I've done them all, but when the real world becomes a little too real I'll make my escape to a virtual world. So am I a geek, or, in the words of Dr No, a 'leper'? Hated by society, outcast, ostracised. No, society made me and I'm still very much a member of it. I'm athletic and tanned and I have a great sex life! What about you, Dr No? What did society do to make you?

David Thomas, Bedford

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Saitek

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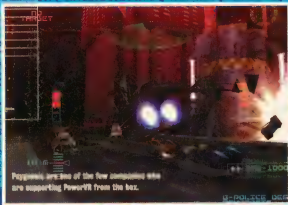
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DEATH TO 2D!

(PART II)





In the last few months the already bloated and confused 3D cards situation has blossomed even further. Clarification begins...

By JAMES FLYNN

"DEAR MR 3DPIX, A letter addressed to PC GAMER began this month... Contrary to popular opinion, we aren't just rabidly supporting the Voodoo chip based cards. True, in our huge 3D card round-up back in issue 47 Steve Owen and myself said that "If you want to play the latest games at 30-60 frames a second and have a P100 with 16Mb of RAM... shop around for a card with 3Dix's Voodoo chip at its core. You won't believe the difference."

Since then, new cards based on a variety of 3D chips have appeared. Most of these, I feel, have arrived too late for developers to worry about in the Christmas run-up and most fail to offer a significant enough performance hike to justify taking a risk with. Sure, there are some snazzy features on a couple, but in general they fall within Voodoo's or PowerVR's performance range. Maybe next year, but for now we'll confine the debate to PowerVR or Voodoo.

A by-product of their arrival, however, has

been to solve one of the simpler choices in buying a 3D card. That is (or was) should I buy a card with a dedicated 3D chip (mainly a Voodoo, PowerVR or Rendition card) or is a combined 2D chip with 3D support (the Xpression or Mystique, for example) good enough? Now, the choice and price of the dedicated 3D cards puts the combined 2D/3D option, although still of a higher performance than the PC has ever seen, definitely in the second tier. To keep up with the development community, you'll need a dedicated 3D card.

What's on offer?

This isn't an article hammering the same message home again. There have been changes and improvements to certain contenders' fortunes (see later), but the background and reasons behind the decisions we made perhaps need a little explaining. In the history of the PC, there's never been a period of such intensive development in one area and such a rush of new products to the marketplace. 3D is

hot and the prize is a technical standard more lucrative than Creative Labs' SoundBlaster dominance. This is big business.

And price is often everything in the consumer battle. In this war a card's street price is trickier to set than most. Basically, as always, it boils down to how much it costs to make, and cost is (more or less) equivalent to the amount and density of the silicon in the chips, and the size of the board itself. Taking a look at the Voodoo cards; they are large, they are ugly, they have a video overlay cable and they have two whacking great chips on them. They are therefore relatively expensive. The PowerVR cards are small, simple and have one, high density chip. They are extremely cheap. (If you're wondering why they're so different, bear in mind that this generation of Voodoo was never really designed for the PC - it was destined to be an arcade board but 3Dix saw a yawning void in the market and went for it!)

These manufacturing differences have led to developments in the market since our last report. From November, you'll be able to buy a PowerVR card manufactured by Videologic for, wait for it, £49. The incredibly low price is basically their last ditch attempt to regain the ground lost to 3Dix's Voodoo cards. **Hot...**

"From November, you'll be able to buy a PowerVR card manufactured by Videologic for, wait for it, £49."

Recommended browsing

The fanaticism that we see supporting one card or another in the letters we receive is mirrored and enhanced on the Internet. Some are impartial, some declare themselves as supporters of one side or another from the start and some just report what's going on. If you want second opinions or more info

on the other contenders, take a gander at:

www.bluesnews.com - a great starting place for all things 3D, but no specifics.
www.powervr.com - the official PowerVR site (good one for Marxists).
www.3dix.com - 3Dix's own

collection

www.gamespot.com - an excellent on-line magazine
www.gamecentre.com - another good on-line magazine
www.ogz.com - a software-based take on new releases
www.voodooextreme.com - fairly technical and pro 3Dix





3Dfx's Voodoo based cards - big and chunky but probably the one for you.



Videologic's PowerVR cards - small, sleek, and possibly an option worth considering.

"I'm assuming that you'll want to play as many games as soon as possible that take advantage of the card's capabilities. And, due to industry support, Voodoo is currently that card."

also have a new PowerVR card, the M411 available for £79. In comparison, the cheapest Voodoo cards are around £100 and those bundled with games are nearer £130. PowerVR has always been cheaper and now it is significantly more so.

In the other crucial move, Videologic have at long last developed PowerVR OpenGL drivers. At its simplest, this means people with PowerVR can now play *Quake* and *Heaven II*. At a little more depth, OpenGL is a programming API used by some programmers as an alternative to 3Dfx. 3Dfx has had its own drivers (Glide) to make the card work with OpenGL, and now Videologic also do (PowerSGL). Until now, PowerVR's lack of OpenGL support has basically meant that unless games were written specifically for PowerVR, the card was no better than a normal graphics card. With the release of the OpenGL drivers, programmers will probably be much less willing to support PowerVR's features, but at least something will still be required.

Quake - simply because it runs on 3Dfx does not mean it will run on PowerVR.

For those who are massively welcome, and the chance of seeing up the most powerful card on the market (ie for about the price of a car) is a rare event indeed. The additional support is a bonus, and our tests show that the performance of *Quake* is roughly comparable, although surprisingly the performance on *Heaven II* was a fraction faster (although not on a P166 system).

It's been a better few months for Videologic and PowerVR, but, despite the price, more developers are still supporting Voodoo. Talking to them about new games, it's always a case of "and you should see it with a 3Dfx card". Nevertheless, when we recommended Voodoo last time it was primarily for this reason, and while PowerVR's situation has improved, it is not out of the

woods yet. Games that were marketed as being PowerVR-only showcases - most notably Capcom's *Resident Evil* and Namco's *Race Racer* - are no longer. Support for PowerVR seems to have been withdrawn for political and commercial reasons and that's not what Videologic need. There is more industry support, and this is just a fact, behind Voodoo. At E3 and ECTS all acceleration was taking place on 3Dfx's cards - not PowerVR. However, next year the situation will probably be different, with Videologic's development programme bearing more fruits and hopefully both technologies sharing the marketplace.



System suitability

Another point that is relevant to most PC owners in the UK today is the system specifications required to get the best out of the cards. PowerVR is a wonderful card - technically the best you can buy - but Videologic admit it delivers unacceptable performance unless you have a P166 or higher and 24Mb of RAM (32Mb ideally). If you can match this and believe the games support will arrive, then it is definitely worth considering. If you've already purchased a PowerVR, you haven't made a mistake but have just tried a different approach. However, judging by our last reader survey, a

Off we go again

Just so you're kept in the know, the 3Dfx cards that are on sale today are just the first generation. Around next March there will be a Voodoo II card available boasting, according to 3Dfx, four times the performance of today's board. They will be backwardly compatible, so games written for Voodoo will also work. These will probably launch for around £250, and drop over the summer so the Christmas '96 (gulp) prices are lowish once again. You could hold on, but if you always thought that way we'd all still be using 286s.

P166 is still a relatively uncommon beast.

3Dfx's Voodoo chip is the only dedicated 3D card worth considering if you have a P100 (or 133), and works just as well as a PowerVR one on a P166 or P200. Voodoo's cards also benefit from 32Mb of RAM (to some gamers, 32Mb of RAM is a more important upgrade than a 3D card) but 16Mb is quite adequate if you don't mind the very occasional jerk. If you already have a PowerVR, you don't have over £100 for a Voodoo card. I'm sure that patches and support will be forthcoming for PowerVR but it's a fact, and this is not biased, that you can play more games on Voodoo.

When recommending these cards, I'm assuming that you'll want to come home and be able to play as many games (past and present) as soon as possible that take advantage of its capabilities. And, due to industry support (the factor that *always* decides the fate of new technology) Voodoo is currently that card. Looking at the 30 or so games reviewed this month, only G-Police has PowerVR support out of the box. Over ten are 3Dfx-ready. Hopefully *Quake II* will be PowerVR-ready from day one - but if not, there's no chance.

"A bloody adrenaline fix with enough options to double its lifespan" *PC Gaming World* 4/5

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There are two sides to every story, and *Quake II* reflects that by including left-handed weapons. To see what that looks like, hold this page up to your nearest mirror and enjoy.

QUAKE II

After the screenshot frenzy of last month, at least the images department has settled down a little. Elsewhere, though, the *Quake II* juggernaut rolls on regardless.

By EDWARD JAMES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE A winner. You'll remember last month that we mentioned American McGee's *Quake II* contest, the brief being to create the biggest *Quake II* logo you could without getting yourself arrested or killed, and the prize being Tokay's leather jacket with an Id logo emblazoned on the back. Well, the deadline came and went, and eventually the lucky recipient was named as Don MacAskill, also known as OneThumb, a minor celebrity in the *Quake* community. Despite Tokay's hints about burning down buildings and creating crop circles, OneThumb took a slightly less interesting path—he and some friends collected as much toilet paper (or "bathroom tissue", as our American friends euphemistically call it) and laid it out on a nearby baseball field (or is it a pitch?). The end result was, if a little on the white side, absolutely immense. So big in fact that OneThumb couldn't get a satisfactory photo of the whole thing. Inspired by the American's



shenanigans, Activision then got on the phone to us to see if we had any ideas about how they could top that. Alas, they bottled out of trying our best idea—carving out a *QII* logo in the side of an enormous chalk hill. Pansies.

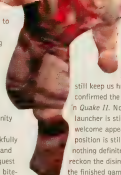
Which is all well and good, but doesn't tell you much about *Quake II*. It's been a slightly non-*Quake II* month in some ways, with the appearance of both the *Hexen II* and *Jedi Knight* demos keeping the on-line community occupied for, ooh, a good couple of days. The screenshots have kept on coming, though thankfully not in the volumes they arrived in last month, and we've generally shied away from them in our quest for pure fact. Thankfully, that has turned up in bite-



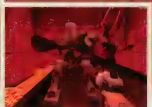
Every day it's looking more and more like *Doom* meets *Quake*. This makes us very happy indeed.

Previously on... Quake II

As every magazine and Web site got its own new *Quake II* images, the world seemed doomed to be buried beneath a mountain of similar-looking screenshots. We went to London and spent the afternoon playing *Quake II*, then announced to the world that we love John Cash. But who was going to win American McGee's trendy leather jacket? Now it can be told...



sized chunks, enough to satisfy but still keep us hungry for more. Finally, Id confirmed the list of weapons that are going to be in *Quake II*. No surprises there—the rocket launcher is still in place, the railgun makes a welcome appearance, but the disintegrator's position is still questionable. Id stressed that nothing definite had been decided yet, but we reckon the disintegrator's chances of appearing in the finished game are slim.



Woo-hoo! Deathmisch! Unfortunately it won't feature in the demo, due any day now. We'll just have to wait a month or so for the full version, then.

"The rocket launcher is still in place, the railgun makes a welcome appearance, but the disintegrator's position is questionable."

Good news for left-handers

John Cash and Brian Hook have cracked the problem of having both left- and right-handed weapons on display. You'd think it was just a job of reversing the model, but apparently it was trickier than that – once you'd reversed them, you had to hack the projectile data so that your rockets or whatever fired from the correct side of the screen. Whatever the problems, you can now opt for a display that reflects your own dextrologica- tendencies, news that

particularly pleased our Matt Pierce. He's right-handed, but after breaking his arm during adolescence he was forced to shoot with his left hand, a tendency that's remained with him ever since.

Not *Quake II*, but still in the *Quake* arena, is the news that *Half Life* has slipped to early next year. It joins *Daikatana* in the realms of slippage, not to mention the non-*Quake* *Unreal*, which is currently on track for release early next year, honest.

Christmas presence

Still no date for *Quake II*'s release, though. It's remaining as tight-lipped as ever, sticking to their promise that it'll be out in time for Christmas. There was a flurry of speculation around the beginning of the month that it would be out on 20 November, but when we asked Id's Barrett Alexander, he dismissed the rumour, adding that Activision's sales force had probably conjured the date up to appease retailers. The swines. As for the demo version, it's very soon – perhaps even by the time you read this. (I'd say early December. – Jim)

We're keeping our fingers crossed that it'll appear in



Will the disintegrator gun be in *Quake II*? Highly-placed Id sources tell us it will appear one way or another.

time for our next CD, anyway. Perhaps if you cross yours as well, it might just work. Look, we're getting desperate here – we want *Quake II* and we're even willing to fall back on archaic superstition if we think it has even a remote chance of affecting the release date.



"Heh. I need T.P. T.P. for my *Quake II* logo, bungولية!"

The Latest On...

HEDZ

With more than 200 heads under their belt, VIS Interactive are beginning to feel like Divine Brown. Thankfully, they don't look anything like her.

By MATTHEW PIERCE



HOW MUCH MORE INTERESTING THE classic board-game *Guess Who* would have been with the heads of VIS's self-styled collect-'em-up game replacing the banal skulls of Roger, Susan, and Albert. And how much more complex the game. Rather than relying on calls of "has yours got blue eyes?", or "does yours wear earrings?", you'd be able to quiz your opponent over whether they had an aircraft carrier-shaped head, or sported a Red Indian chief's headdress.

It wasn't to be, of course, but MB Games' loss is VIS's gain, because with *HEDZ* (it stands for Head Extreme Destruction Zone), Dunfermline's only software developers, are putting the final touches to what's been called "a contender for the next big thing," by, of all people, us, back in issue 45.

Since we were granted an audience with a very early version of the game back in that issue, *HEDZ* appears to be progressing nicely. We got our hands on a playable demo this month, which shows how the combat and scoring systems work.

Previously on... HEDZ

We compared *HEDZ* favourably to the N64's incredible *Mario* back in issue 45, and that comparison stands as far as the graphics engine goes. The previously unexplained method of collecting and 'dunking' opponents' heads is now explained too. You simply kill someone, and with their head in your hands, walk over to one of the many special dunking zones scattered around the levels, and pop it in. Instantly it's added to your own collection.

Your chosen heads are represented by the five icons, each of which can be selected with the touch of a key.

Don't lose your head

From the intro screen, where you choose five characters to take into the battle arena, you're straight into the thick of it; each head has two modes of fire at his or her disposal – a standard and special attack.

Both are unique to the particular head you're playing with, and each are in the style of that character – Groucho, for instance, shoots glasses; the American footballer, his ball; and General Patton drives about in a tank, shelling indiscriminately.

The engine still looks as impressively smooth as when we first saw it, although we're still not convinced about how effectively the combat will be implemented. The targeting in particular remains a worry – the levels we saw being so open that relentless hammering of the

'fire' key while standing inches away from your opponent seemed to be the only real option.

If, however, the complete game features more compact levels with enclosed areas as well as these open expanses, then *HEDZ* could come into its own.

Graphically, it's nearly all there – the characters themselves, although gliding rather than walking over the landscapes, are nicely animated using a combination of voxels and polygons, even though at times the heads aren't instantly recognisable from each other – a problem that would scupper an enjoyable multi-player game.

Having said all this, *HEDZ* remains one of the most original game ideas that we've seen in a long while, and should VIS be able to polish up the glitches that are present at the moment, we could be looking at a classic in the making. We hope so.



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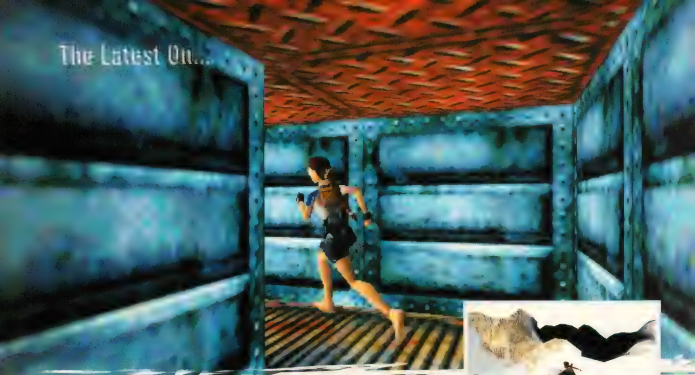
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The Latest On...



TOMB RAIDER II

The world's most sacred places are aflutter as Lara prepares for a fresh bout of raiding. Do you feel lucky, Tomb?

By NATHAN JONES

RESOLUTELY IGNORING THE gallivantings of her real-world and higher-resolution counterpart, our latest experiences with *Tomb Raider II* suggest Lara Croft's feet are firmly rooted to the Earth. In contrast, Rhona Mitra, the actress who's fulfilling every lusty lady's dream by riding on the back of Lara Croft, seems caught up in some new high-flying scheme every week. The on-off *Tomb Raider* single 'Beautiful Days', a tour with U2, *Tomb Raider* the movie. Klayman from The Neverhood can only dream of such an alter-ego.

But Lara seems unfazed. True, she's now less prone to hiding her bushels in tunnels. The infamous Venice shots have proved just the tip of a more cosmopolitan campaign, which looks like taking in The Great Wall of China, Tibet and a sunken ocean liner. Also, while she's retained her workday skimpy clothes, she's got new

skimpy ones too, including a wetsuit with a matching harpoon. But she still packs her infamous twin shooters and she's not sated her appetite for slaying wild beasts. Indeed, she actually extended her hit-list to include dogs, rats and men. Radical feminists will have a field day.

Tweaked to perfection

Tomb Raider II (officially 'The Dagger of Xian') also refines the game's 3D engine. Lara is more pert than

Forget girls, guns and motorcycles. It's babes on snowscooters that'll rattle our cage this Christmas.

ever, and she's gained a few polygons since we last saw her. Her ponytail now sways about as she jogs along. Dynamic lighting effects are evident underground, although less obvious outdoors, and there's a lot more colour in the textures.

We've tested Lara's latest skills too. The most interesting is her ability to scale the walls of her new urban environs. But we'll have to wait to see how well Core can integrate these new abilities into the wider game. Moving beyond the athletics of the original is only to be encouraged, but if it results in cries of "I can't climb up there, silly", we won't be smiling. With the key men behind *Tomb Raider* having jumped ship, those remaining still have to prove themselves when *Tomb Raider II* is released at the end of November.

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Previously on... Tomb Raider II

Tomb Raider II first came to our attention back in July, when we found Core Design well into a sequel only six months after achieving blockbuster success with *Tomb Raider* at Christmas. We feared a quick cash-in. We also heard rumours of a multi-player version, rumours which remain unconfirmed.



Tomb Raider II is certainly looking very similar to the original, but then that's probably a good thing.

At this point,
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GRAND THEFT AUTO

DMA get car sick. By MARK DONALD



The game features a rather 'groovy' soundtrack that had us all tapping our feet to its pleasing rhythm.

GRAND THEFT AUTO HAS REPUTEDLY been on the brink of release since June's E3 but kept under wraps till now while the coast cleared. Previously the coast was jammed with the slimy Carnageddon 'sick game' mess involving the BBFC, blood of many hues and reactionary statements from fatuous MPs. With *Postal* making headlines in the Sunday Times a few weeks ago, *Grand Theft Auto* looks certain to be next to walk into the firing line with its, ooh, doozy story-line.

Dropped into mob-land paradises like New York, Miami and San Francisco, your task is to become one of the 'family' by successfully completing jobs going up the scale from, er, package deliveries to driving truck loads of explosives into Police HQ.

Anyone who actually bothers to play the game, though, before mouthing off about it, is as likely to be offended by it as they are by the violent content of Tom & Jerry. Viewed from an eye-in-the-sky perspective, your small-time hoodlum plays a game of cross-town cat-and-mouse with the local constabulary, which is nothing if not cartoon.

Dangerous driving

Staying one step ahead of the law means acquiring wheels. Standard procedure is to flag down a motorist, drag them from their vehicle, and leaving them for dead in the road, making good your escape at top speed. Vrooming round the streets it's all too easy for a Brit to inadvertently run foul of the law thanks to the Americans' insistence on



Determined exploring of the mean city streets will reveal secret urban retreats of hi-explosive bliss.

driving on the wrong side of the road. Bumps and scrapes inevitably follow and even from the zoomed-out viewpoint you can see the car deform while feeling the handling deteriorate. A high-end sports car (known as the beast GT5) is capable of superb handbrake turns, leaving skids all over the road, and manoeuvres significantly differently from, say, the school bus which has the clear advantage in more robust situations.

Although the graphics downplay the effect, *GTA* feels right. Jobs are relayed via pager or anonymous public phone boxes, dodgy dockers move on stolen motors, respray shops put the cops off the scent and police efforts to stop you increase in pitch as



your notoriety accumulates.

The main danger for *GTA* arises from DMA's commendable efforts to give you the freedom of the city. The massive metropolises are yours to explore and the jobs yours to ignore. Unfortunately free-form games often lack long-term direction and tangible objectives. Whether *GTA*'s loose script will end up losing the drift will be fully investigated in next month's review.

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Previously on... GTA

GTA snagged our lenses as one of the most vibrantly original games on show at last year's ECTS. Indeed, we couldn't think of another game quite like it. The uncompromising emphasis on gameplay gladdened our hearts and we were rather taken with the designers' intention to develop a fully functioning city to cheer up after your murderous motoring mess.





Heavy Gear promises to bring us cities with more substance than just three upturned shoe-boxes.

HEAVY GEAR

What's this on the horizon, coming on like Begsbie in an exoskeleton and levelling offices to the left and right of PCG with a blast from its wrist? By NATHAN JONES

YOU CAN NEVER OVERESTIMATE A MECH, nor, for that matter a Gear. Activision may have lost the MechWarrior licence, but Heavy Gear, its 3D combat game featuring, well, mechanised warriors, looks like proving it hasn't lost the knack of creating games starring hulking robots the size of houses.

Indeed, the dynamics of the Gear are already showing up the Mech for the rickety old duffer he is. Your 1997 vintage Gear can crouch down behind rocky outcrops, lob freshly implemented hand grenades at hidden enemies and also side-step – something actually banned from MechWarrior. This one simple manoeuvre might solve the biggest problem with previous

MechWarrior titles – a tendency for battling Mechs to endlessly circle each other.

Those hand-grenades are just one of the many weapons popping out of Heavy Gear's overstuffed armoury cabinets whenever a weary clod-footed Gear stomps by. Some of the most powerful weapons, like the heavy particle accelerator and the field gun, are too big for even the largest Gear. It's here that the game's other vehicles – its hover tanks and air-support – come into play. Gears are just the most exciting part of the mongrel armies in Heavy Gear. You must play to your own Gear's strengths if you're not to be disintegrated at a distance or bludgeoned to bits in a melee.



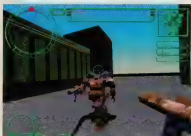
Changing Gear

With this in mind, we've been investigating the drag-and-drop Gear customisation system, which makes fitting your Gear up a doddle. First, you choose a torso, and by doing so pick from four templates – the fast-moving Scout Gear, the versatile valkyrie-like Battle Gear, the heavily armed and armoured Support Gear or the Strider, a massively powerful Gear which is easily outrun by snails. You then snap various limbs, a head and an engine into place. This completes the chassis. Via a similar process you decide on weapons and armour until, da-da-da, the 62nd Century's answer to Godzilla awaits your command.

We've already planned a dozen strategies, and we can't wait to try them out when Heavy Gear's released this Christmas.

Previously on... Heavy Gear

The news that Activision weren't going to abandon robots on losing the rights to MechWarrior first set us on the none-too-inconspicuous trail of Heavy Gear. We found Activision programmers, with more than five years' experience of coding robot combat, already deep in the conversion of Dream Pod 9's role-playing game to the PC.



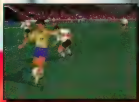
The bigger those Gears come, the harder they fall, and the harder you look back at the barracks.

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The Latest On...

SENSIBLE SOCCER 2000



Yes, I know we get a new version of *Sensible Soccer* every Christmas, but this is a *totally* new one. Honest.

By STEVE OWEN



The action promises to be as fluid as previous versions.

THINK WIZBALL. THINK PARALLAX. THINK Cannon Fodder. And think *Sensible World Of Soccer*. If anyone fails to agree that Jon Hare's Sensible Software are and have been one of the smallest development companies that demand tremendous respect, then they are invited to be beaten senseless with truncheons by Italian Carabinieri! Keep your *Actua*, keep your *FIFA*, because the only PC game worth playing is the gloriously simple *Sensi*.

Sure, Jon Hare, big cheese at Sensible Software and one of the few genuine characters still in the business, is the first to admit that *Sensible Soccer* is rapidly losing its teeth.

"I don't think the last version of *Sensible Soccer* should have been released," he confesses, while simultaneously protesting his innocence. "It was a last ditch effort by Warner Interactive to earn some cash." But it was to no avail. Warner closed a few months later, but, happily for Sensible, passed their catalogue over to giants GT Interactive.

"We've been working on *Sensible Soccer* 2000 for three years now," explains Jon. This may sound like a long time for an arcade game, but Sensible still use a small dedicated team to get their results, only drafting in extra artists and programmers at this late stage to 'tidy up' ready for a Christmas release.

The 3D treatment

Sensible Soccer was always a game that didn't bother simulating football, choosing to represent the Great Game as a fast-paced arcade game instead. Fun, speed, tactics, rapid response. Which, of course, meant that when we heard that a 3D version in the pipeline we were naturally concerned that Hare and Friends had sold



With *Sensible Soccer* 2000, the world's tiniest football sprites are dragged kicking and screaming into true 3D.

out. After playing an 80% finished version this month, though, we can happily report that this isn't the case.

Most noticeably the control system is almost identical to the Amiga classic, with the addition of a speed burst button when you have the ball. The view is almost top-down as before, but with little block-blobs replaced by SVGA sprites, motion-captured and highly detailed, but still offering you the greatest look-ahead so that you can plan accurate passes and shots.

So although a brand new game, it is, thankfully, the old *Sensi* but just looking a bit more late '90s.

A statistician's dream

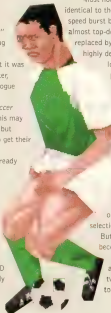
Statos will appreciate the hundreds of accurate teams pre-programmed, and the inevitable Sensible custom teams. Meanwhile, coaches can fine-tune a team's performance down to how each individual player will react to the opposition and the ball. An impressive selection of options.

But primarily, *Sensible Soccer* 2000 may become the best football game on the PC, while also proving to be one of the finest arcade games, one of the most compelling two-player games and perhaps the best way to fill a spare ten minutes.

Previously on... Sensi 2000

Other than the briefest of mentions warning that a 3D *Sensi* was imminent, Jon Hare and crew have been keeping their cards below the table.

But its predecessors have frequently found their way onto PC GAMER's hallowed pages. Special mention must go to the inevitable excitement felt by Sensible Software when their beloved game successfully charted at position 41 in this year's PCG Top 100 games listing.



IF YOU WANT
THE ULTIMATE
ADVENTURE GAME
AND YOU DON'T
OWN A CONSOLE,

HERE'S SOME CONSOLATION . . .

THIS LAP
00:03:22
TOTAL
00:03:22

BEST LAP
01:38:10
BEST TOTAL
05:03:70



We haven't had a driving game to rave about for ages. But although *Screamer Rally* outs corners by using the *Screamer 2* engine, it looks saucy enough to liven things up for racers.

SCREAMER RALLY

"Are we nearly there yet, Dad? I feel sick. Can we stop at that Trusthouse Forte?" All phrases you won't hear in the latest *Screamer* title. So I don't know why I wrote them really.

By MATTHEW PIERCE

THERE'S NO DOUBT *SCREAMER 2* remains one of the most popular racing games you can install on your desktop slab. Featuring a super-smooth game engine, scenery that's so good-looking you crash while staring at the trees, and, most importantly, loads of garish vehicles to spin around in, it vastly improved on the original, finally giving PC owners a bit of ammunition against the constant goading of console-owners.

Now, developers Milestone have overhauled the bodywork of *Screamer 2*, changed the sports coupes to full on turbo rutter rally mobiles, and added more tracks and essential 3D card support.

The first difference you notice is the extra speed, which handles the more detailed landscapes with aplomb. On one of our 3Dfx machines it ran like a dream and looked beautiful - real-time reflections from



the rear window, a flurry of leaves and mud left in your wake, and crunching pile-ups with your competitors.

Up against the big boys

Going up against the established pedigree of Eurospire's Network Q games, and their most recent release, the well-received *International Rally Championship*, *Screamer Rally* may have much to prove in the way of realism. It is, however, not just *Screamer 2* with rally cars bolted on; variable weather and track conditions, including rain, snow, ice, gravel and mud mean modifying your car to the specific environment is essential.

In single-player mode, another two teams have been added to compete against, while you yourself choose from five new cars and seven new tracks,



Serene, rural France is the perfectly tranquil setting for this horrifying and needless fatal accident.

taking you as far afield as China, Arizona and Colombia.

The 3D card support has transformed the look of the game, with transparent smoke emanating from your wheelspins, tail-lights glowing in the darkness, and incredibly smooth road surfaces.

Car-handling has also been dramatically changed, meaning that far more use of the brakes will be necessary to negotiate the hairpin corners. In that respect, as well as the increased number of rival racers and their Improved AI, *Screamer Rally* poses much more of a challenge than its predecessors did. The single-player mode allows for a one-off race, a full championship, or time trials, while the multi-player aspect, like *Screamer 2*, lets you play split-screen on one PC with a friend, or six players on a network.

Coming so soon after Eurospire's impressive *International Rally Championship*, it may be that fans of the genre have already got their fix of muddy racing for this year. However, there's no doubting that *Screamer Rally* looks to be a worthy challenger, and come next month we should know for sure, as we get our driving-gloved hands on a review copy.



Previously on... Screamer Rally

We had a brief butcher's at Virgin's off-road racer back in PCG 47. We waxed lyrical about the tourist-infested places you'll be driving through in *Screamer Rally*, although no shots of the actual cars were available at the time. Surprisingly, the game's speed is far faster than we originally thought possible, and it already looks as good a rally game as we've seen on the PC.



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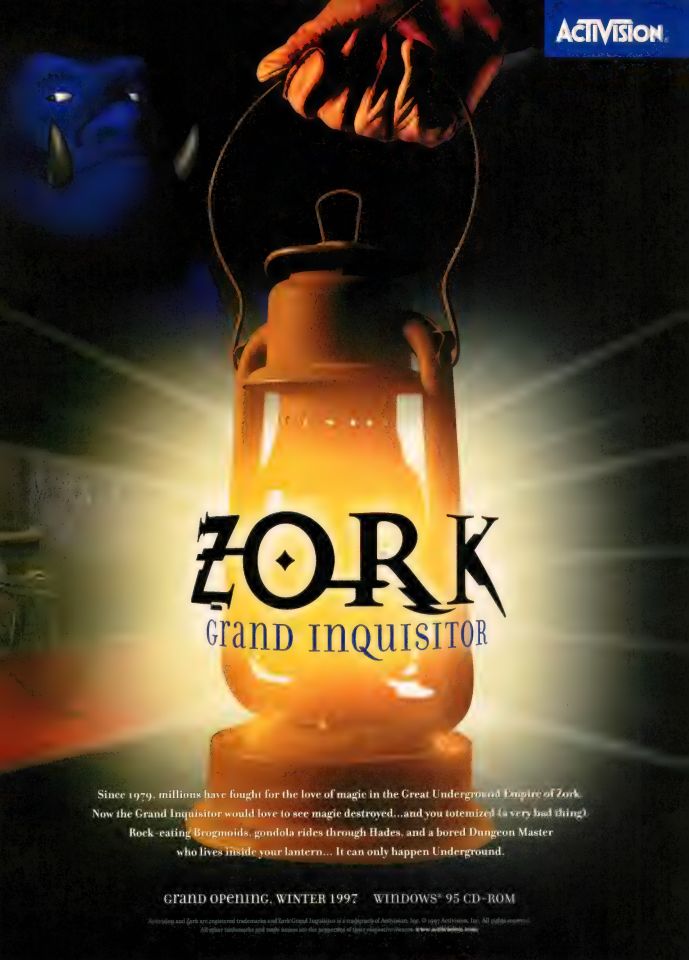
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Actual 360° views from the game.

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Grand opening, WINTER 1997 WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM

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AT LAST, A GOLF GAME WITH NO HANDICAP.



Actual screen shots



FEEL THE CLUB THROUGH YOUR FINGERTIPS. YOUR MOUSE IS POISED TO ADDRESS THE BALL. A SUBTLE OPENING OF YOUR WRIST ANGLES THE CLUBFACE. SWEEP THE MOUSE BACK, THEN FORWARD IN ONE ELEGANT MOTION. A SMOOTH AND RHYTHMIC SWING, FULL OF POWER & CONTROL. TRUE CONTACT. MOUSE ON BALL.

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It feels perfect. And it looks perfect too. Flowing terrain, survived to the last inch. Fine textures down the rolling fairway to the contoured green. The bunkers raked, and 20,000 frames of animation put you in the correct stance even in the most awkward lie.

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Reviews

Licence to thrill

HOW HAS GAMING changed? Let us count the ways; and with a reference text such as this month's PC GAMER in your hands, the job's made infinitely easier.

The games, good, bad and ugly, that have passed under our critical glare this month amply demonstrate all that the PC has to offer you, the reader.

Our Game Of The Month rosette is pinned securely to the generous breast of Westwood's *Blade Runner*, a point-and-click adventure that, in its brilliantly seamless blend of rendered scenes from the movie, an intelligent script, and complex puzzles, illustrates how much the genre has developed, and how much more it is also likely to deliver.

The film's an office favourite, and its bleak vision of a world years from now has inspired countless films, advertisements, and, indeed, computer games.

If you need any evidence, take a glance at *G-Police* on page 141 - this arcade-style helicopter shoot-'em-up draws unashamedly from Ridley Scott, and Phillip K. Dick's, visions, and is greatly improved for it.

Let's hope that EA, who are developing another of Dick's novels, *UBIK*, produce a title of similar quality, and don't simply waste the licence - a criticism that could be directed at Interplay for failing to make *Starfleet Academy* the combat

sim that fans of the series and films so deserve. See page 114 for more details of Kirk's latest, and last, outing.

The genre-furthering rationale can also be applied to first-person shoot-'em-ups.

Jedi Knight, LucasArts follow-up to the disappointing *Dark Forces*, is immeasurably better than its predecessor featuring brain-taxing puzzles, sumptuous graphics, and absolutely loads of it.

There's also the return of the worms in Team 17's long-awaited sequel, and, contrary to our, erm, slightly controversial review of the original game, we all loved the multi-player aspect in this sequel. Okay, it's not *Quake*, but then again what is? (*Well, erm, Quake, I suppose... Jim*)

Nostalgia's been permeating the office too, ever since the legendary John Rittman popped in to show us *Matchday 2*. All of us used to be big fans of his original Specy games, so we were saddened to discover that his latest baby isn't as groundbreaking as his first titles.

Anyway, there's over 40 pages of reviews to read all about, so without further ado...



PC GAMER'S Reviewers

Matt Pierce spent all his spare time growing a beard for this picture.

James Flynn is vice editor.

Mark Donald had his hair cut. He now looks like the original Carpati.

Nathan Jones put Warren on his hard drive, and subsequently attracted a black flock at blackbirds.

James Ashton is, aesthetically-pleasing and authoritative as *G-Police* Mike, considerably, he looks at this month.

Jason Weston holds an RCWS - the nationally recognised qualification in wargaming studies.

Steve Owen is suffering from vertigo after reviewing too tight sims this month.

Dean Evans asked to review a game. We gave him *7th Legion*, and, curiously, haven't seen him since.

Richard Langhurst has gone 'golfist'. That is, he now spends our mail every morning.

Joe Smith guides *High* from university every week to do his washing. Silly boy.

How the scores work

We think very carefully about every mark we award. Each score is only decided upon after many hours of concentrated play, and accurately reflects not only the quality of the game but what it offers over and above any similar titles.

If we give a game a good score, it's because it genuinely deserves one, not because it's exclusive or because we want to keep it with the software companies. We aren't afraid to tell you if a game stinks, and they seem only too happy to

point this out to us each month. Oh well.

Anyway, here's how it works:

50%+

An almost perfect game and one that will bring tears of fondness to your eyes in years to come. It'll have to be good to get a mark up here.

85%-89%

An excellent game - technically impressive and very enjoyable. It will become the proud owner of our Game of Distinction logo.

70%-84%

Plenty of fun to be had here, but something important is missing.

50%-69%

Flawed in several ways, but perhaps an interesting way to spend an hour or two.

30%-49%

Something has gone horribly wrong somewhere. Through bad design or awful implementation, this game doesn't deserve an inch of shop shelf space.

0%-29%

A crime.

Blade Runner

Games of films are notoriously dire. How typical of the mould-shattering Westwood then that their take on *Blade Runner* is arguable the finest adventure ever created.



Blade Runner's technology provides the tools to create this intensely atmospheric game.

LATE IN THE 20TH CENTURY, WESTWOOD STUDIOS advanced the adventure genre into the NEXT phase – using a game virtually identical to the dystopian cinematic that spawned it – known as *BLADE RUNNER*.

Blade Runner immediately identified itself as being superior in style and depth, and at least equal in enjoyability, to the best that the legendary LucasArts coding house had ever constructed.

Blade Runner is being used across the world to keep the good name of Westwood in place, and protect against imposters.

Following *Blade Runner*'s exemplary combination of technology, execution and vision, it is almost certain that traditional



2D adventure games will be declared illegal on Earth. Special games police – COMMON SENSE squads – will have orders to shoot, upon sight, any trespassing 'old school' attempts at creating immersive adventures.

This will not be called execution. It will be called mercy.



Westwood's *Blade Runner* IS Ridley Scott's eponymously named film in every possible way. The opening scene: camera cruises over the sprawling, 106 million person city of Los Angeles, November 2019 (re-created from scratch by Westwood) and swoops in past the vast video-screens into the dark. Flames escape from towering structures jutting out of the sky-touching down district and you descend into the grim hell that stinks beneath.

And, then, as you arrive at Crime Scene No 1, the animal shop massacre, the first



The rendering in the game extends to a mass of cut-scenes and numerous endings. It's incredible.

Inimitable

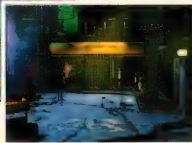
"One of the rarer moments in gaming where there is style and content."

inklings of a massively pleasing surprise begin to sink home. *Blade Runner* would have been the perfect vehicle for style over content. But here we are treated to one of the rarer moments in gaming where there is style and content. It isn't the video footage that's setting the atmosphere — the in-game sets are perfectly capable of achieving this, and with far more effectiveness in the long term. Outside, rain tumbles down, splashing onto the ground endlessly and creating a thin, grim film. New



York City-style steam blows across the foreground and background from overloaded sewers: flickering lights periodically

What action there is in *Blade Runner* usually arrives via your gun. Commands in the game are accessed with a left-click, and a right-click gets your piece out. Target practice takes place in the police station (left and below).





Do the V-K

Surely one of the great opening sequences in sci-fi, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* kicks off with Leon, a new employee at the Tyrell Corporation, undergoing the Voight-Kampff test. Designed to distinguish Replicants from humans, the machine uses a combination of retina and respiration responses to probing questions to distinguish between the two. In the game your V-K machine works fantastically. After calibrating the machine (it's very important to get this right) you have the choice of asking low, medium or high intensity questions to determine a verdict. Afterwards, watch the eye dilate (the video is so crisp you might as well be leering at some poor unfortunate in real-life from an inch away) and a couple of sliders veer in opposite directions. Then, using your skill and judgement, either blow away the flesh in front of you or, if they're human, let them live (or blow them away anyway).



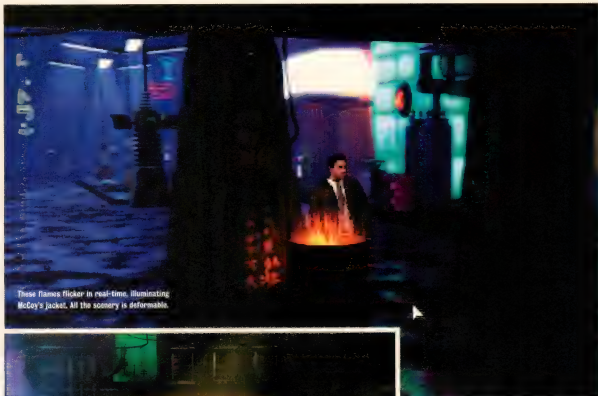
The characters occasionally become blocky, but their level of detail, motion capture and character negate this.

illuminate the locations. Police spinners pass overhead, their beams playing through the amalgam of mess and eventually finding the ground.

Where they find you, McCoy, waiting. McCoy, Deckard's game counterpart, is the *Blade Runner* charged with solving various crimes linked to the completely human-looking Nexus 6 Replicants roaming around LA on a mission. A sequence that starts with the bloody but innocuous murder of a priceless white tiger, and leads on to the discovery of a rogue unit of explosive and gun-happy Replicants intent on making amends for... something.

Blade Runner is a conventional adventure on the surface, but lurking beneath the ultra-slick presentation are the elements that genuinely advance the genre more than, I think, any game has done since LucasArts' heyday *Monkey Island/Indiana Jones* era. I've certainly enjoyed playing it more than any adventure since *Monkey Island*, and that's something I've been waiting to say for quite a few years.

It has the nerve to challenge the adventure game's conventional problem solving methodology and genuinely establishes new standards. Quite apart from the visuals, the system in which *Blade Runner* handles the clues you garner throughout your investigation is particularly refreshing. Using your KIA (Knowledge Information Assistant) every piece



These flames flicker in real-time, illuminating McCoy's jacket. All the scenery is deformable.



All the key characters are either human or replicant – deciding which is which is the crucial part of the game.

of information you locate in the game is automatically processed, filed and attributed to the correct suspects. But, and this is the novel and effective part, this isn't performed in a way that detracts from your abilities to solve the riddles themselves – they just make book-keeping unnecessary. Early example: two men break into a shop and there are two sets of footprints. KIA creates two anonymous suspects, and later, when video evidence is processed, attributes a face to each, along with other clues. By investigation you can hopefully gradually build up a profile of the key players (both human and Replicant) and move forward from there. You can also review any of the clues at any

time if you fancy a refresher. Massively clever and completely transparent.

This simple and powerful system is, crucially, not the be all and end all of your game. Mindless clue accumulation is not what

“Genuinely different each time you play it.”

Blade Runner's all about. In something that sounds very much like a press release statement, there really is an entire world playing its own theories out around you. Other *Blade Runners*, (most notably the incredible *Crystal* – who, incidentally, is the best render I've ever seen in

a game), cops, Replicants and humans all go about their own business and aims.

This manifests itself as the game's most ambitious facet. *Blade Runner* genuinely is different each time you play it – a claim easily justified by saying the major supporting characters that lead you to the top are randomly either human or Replicant. Depending on which they are, and influenced by their aims and fears, they react differently to you. This randomness, incredibly, also applies for each conversation. The evolution of events around them and what they 'know' govern their behaviour as much as their character.

This variance is enhanced by your own attitude to the characters. The game provides you with four mood adjusters from polite to surly. While not extreme (your lines tend to be a little shorter when surly), the short-term



Speak to me!

The script throughout the game (bar a few compulsory and loathsome Americanisms like "you're a cool cat") is sharp, as brief as possible, varied and often possesses a decent sense of dry humour. The lines are generally spoken well – certainly as well as its rivals –

and Westwood have largely succeeded in avoiding repetitive "I can't help you anymore" style conversation endings. More often than not, looking around a little more or returning in your spinner at a later date will open up the conversation.

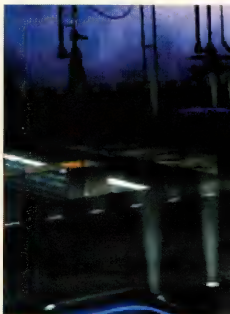
effects are noticeable and the long-term path the game takes will also be affected.

Accompanying *Blade Runner*'s remarkable gaming achievements are the graphics. *Blade Runner: The Film* was all about atmosphere and *Blade Runner: The Game* soaks you in it just as effectively. The behind-the-scenes processes (now hidden away) are amazing. The end results place Westwood in the Id/3D Realms-only league of creating a game with exactly what is required graphically to succeed

"Very much a gritty action adventure, requiring reflexes as well as quick thought."



(Above) The police mainframe and (right) your KIRA – the invaluable little tool that sorts what counts from the rest.



without limiting it to beast machines.

Somehow, and when you see the amount of movement and detail you'll be amazed, this runs perfectly on a P90. The only nag is occasional pixelation (particularly near the start for some reason), but the upside to the technology is that McCoy's environment – lights, cigarette smoke, etc. – affect him perfectly. When you see Animoid Row (the centre for replica animal construction and an area around which you spend a significant part of the early game exploring) it looks *better* than the film. The signs, the vehicles, the sets and the lighting all combine to provide the perfect backdrop for what really matters in *Blade Runner* – the 'people'.

One of the most appealing basic premises in *Blade Runner* is that you're dealing with people. Unlike most adventures, you are naturally interacting closely with people (not objects) who continually matter. There's no combining the Feather of Heaviness with the apex of the pyramid to create an earthquake,



(Above) Back on your apartment roof. (Left) The man from the eye clinic cooks up a potion.



information that this engineer might be in danger, but not that the bomb is already ticking. If you visit somewhere else first on your *Gabriel Knight*-style cityscape littered with locations, the bomb will go off. Simple. When you arrive, you'll be greeted with the post-explosion scene. But if you act quickly and arrive in time, you become a part of the scene instead of an interested party chasing up the pieces.

The out and out 'thinking' puzzles are also great. The most satisfying (apart from the V K test) is your ESPER magnification machine. You know that bit in the film where Deckard finds a girl's face bounced off a mirror in a photo someone left lying around? You get to do that lots. And it's great, frustrating (you have to be fairly spot on) and satisfying fun. And it even makes the proper clicking sound as you scroll around.

In fact, everything makes the proper sound. The Vangelis music has been recreated to provide the correct eerie sense of exploration. The spinners go 'whoosh' in a way any 21st century spinner would be proud of and the guns pop away baddies (and goodies alike if you make a bad call) with a terminal bang. And everything makes perfect sense.

The 13-ender

That gives you some idea of the scope and evolution of the world. There are apparently 13 (I've seen only 2 so far) different conclusions, based to a large degree on how you view the Replicants' cause throughout the game. I'm sure that somewhere during the game's planning there was a detailed flow diagram depicting the various 'paths' you can choose, but there's no evidence of having to follow certain routes as you play through.

the likes of which we see so often and I generally find an unutterable bore. *Blade Runner* is very much a gritty action adventure, with puzzles frequently requiring reflexes as well as quick thought. A genetic engineer is handcuffed to a wall and a bomb is beeping urgently nearby. Draw the gun, shoot the handcuffs off, and run as fast as you can out of there or be caught in the blast. If you rescue him quickly enough, he'll provide some more leads, but if he does die then there are supplementary reports from the police and other avenues anyway. (Sorry about giving that one away but there are many, many more.)

The sense of urgency that occurs in isolated puzzles is evident throughout the game. In the above puzzle you discover the

Later, if you decide the Replicants have a cause worth fighting for, you may continue functioning as a *Blade Runner*, carry on investigating with police help but withhold crucial information from your colleagues and the police mainframe to make their life harder.

You may think this game has come out of nowhere. In fact, it's taken over two and a half years to make. Why there hasn't been more hype surrounding *Blade Runner* is baffling – it deserved to be up there with *Quake II* in the software houses' pre-Christmas publicity frenzy. Hopefully this lack of attention will not detract from what is a 'truly remarkable game: bold, novel, inspiring and brilliantly executed. It does every justice to the film.

JAMES FLYNN

Publisher	Blade Runner
Developer	Blade Runner
Price	£49.99
Minimum System	2.33MHz Pentium, 16MB RAM
Recommended	3.33MHz Pentium, 32MB RAM

Graphics Accelerator	None
Sound Support	None
Multi-Player	None
Web Address	None
Release Date	1994

PC GAMER

A joy to live within. A joy to talk about with other people. A rare breed, indeed.

94

Jedi Knight



Masterful

REMEMBER THE BOARD-GAME Mastermind? It was allegedly based on the TV show of the same name, yet to play, you guessed the order of a series of coloured pegs instead of answering specialist subject quiz questions. Even more bizarrely, crusty old Iclander Magnus Magnusson was ousted from the box artwork in favour of a svelte Chinese woman draped over an old bloke with a beard.

What's Mastermind got to do with *Jedi Knight*? Well, like that bizarre board-game 'interpretation' of the quiz show, *Jedi Knight*'s stab at the Star Wars universe is similarly skewed.

Aliens that only warranted a cursory appearance in the Mos Eisley Cantecina scene make up the game's main adversaries in the first four levels, while Tuskan Raiders bear very little resemblance to the film's equivalent.

One of the most absurdly named heroes in PC gaming history is back. And this time he's brought his lightsabre.

In that respect then (and with the inclusion of cheesily acted and cheap-looking FMV sequences), *Jedi Knight* doesn't really succeed in capturing the essence of George Lucas' universe. Worry not, though, for if you can suspend your Star Wars disbelief, *Jedi Knight* – or *Dark Forces 2* if you prefer – is a huge success. Not on all fronts, granted, but we'll come to those later.

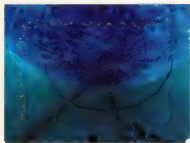
What you need to know first is that as far as first person shoot-'em-ups are concerned, this game offers one of the most challenging, rewarding and exciting single-player experiences you can buy.

To be honest, we didn't always think this would be the case, because on first loading up

Jedi Knight it's hard not to be disappointed. Without the benefit of a 3D card, you'll be weeping at the sight of a pink, pixelly blob, rather than staring in delight at the nicely detailed and animated alien that the graphics accelerators gives us.

Move around a bit, and you'll then be

"Offers something fresh and original despite the competition being legion."



(Above) Stormtroopers. At last. You have to wait until Level 5, but it's worth it in the end. (Above-left) Kyle practises for the annual Imperial 'spit the furthest' competition. Either that, or he's using the 'lightning' force power.

Even better than the real thing

Unmistakably Star Wars? Well, not really, no. Granted, it's a massive game, filled with taxing puzzles, loads to shoot at, and breathtaking scenery, but you won't remember any of these scenes from the films...



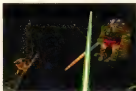
ALIEN NATION

A brief starring role in *Star Wars* turns into a best actor award for these tentacle-headed aliens who populate the first two levels. The ones in black generally pack a blaster, while the brown ones tend to be unarmed. Try to shoot them between the eyes.



HERE, LITTLE PIGGY

Gammorrean Guards. Only in Jabba's Palace, weren't they? Not so in *Jedi Knight*. They'll appear when you least expect them to, most specifically on these ramps here. A whole sty-full of the critters awaits you in the room at the top.



LITTLE AND LARGE

One of the hardest levels sees you tackling these two sabre-wielding monsters. The larger tends to use his force grip to choke you to death, while the smaller one makes himself invisible and hacks at your legs – probably how Yoda would fight.



ALBERT SQUARE

A nice quiet marketplace, filled with fruit and veg, pedestrians, and a few Tuskan Raiders. Why, you almost expect Grant and Phil to turn up, buy a few apples from Mark's stall, then retire for a swift pint in the Vic next door.

aware of the faintly ridiculous noise your character, Kyle Katarn, makes as he runs down corridors. The audible pit pat of his seemingly tap-shoed feet are laughable, and switching to third-person chase camera view confirms your worst fears – your hero minces along like Julian Clary on a particularly camp day.

Not a great start then. However, stick firmly in first-person view and you'll soon be blasting beautifully animated Stormtroopers and

AT-STs, struggling to think your way around the many deviously difficult puzzles, and learning to use your lightsabre properly.

The tasks generally rest on your dexterity with the control interface – a superbly customisable *Quake*-style method which after a few days of practice becomes as intuitive as *Quake*'s, except with the added bonus of a crouch key, a simple to-use inventory, and the imaginative 'force' powers which you 'earn'

along the way depending on your discovery of the levels' various secrets.

Of course, anyone who's ever played *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Quake*, or even the original *Dark Forces* will very quickly become au fait with the importance of the environment; barrels can be blown up, destroying nearby creatures with their blast radius, rocket jumps are possible with the rail disruptor weapon, and inch-perfect jumps are needed to avoid the infinite drops



(Above) Even beasts of this size are beautifully animated. (Right) Probe Droids hover menacingly.

off tiny ledges. Obviously it's a familiar genre, but here it's been executed with such care and attention to level design, graphical effects and even enemy AI that the game manages to offer something fresh and original despite the competition being legion.

For instance, you'll often come across huge, and I mean *huge*, ships and structures, such as the TIE Bombers which fly past dropping bombs, Imperial shuttles, and the ubiquitous and superbly animated AT-STs which stomp around the Imperial Palace grounds, lasers tracking your every step. Also, the game's levels are vast affairs, filled with dead-ends, alternative routes and many, many secrets – so much so that completing just one can take hours.

For one accustomed to *Quake's* intimacy, *Jedi Knight's* levels initially appear *too* open. Soon, though, you'll find yourself crawling down ventilator shafts, riding down water chutes, travelling down massive tunnels filled with explosive fuel, and... oh, there's so much more. Even levels that require one-on-one lightsaber duels with huge pig-like creatures. Excellent. The only oversight being that you don't encounter any of the superb Stormtroopers until at least Level 5.

Thankfully, your allegiance isn't set towards the goody-goody light side either. Populating the levels you'll find pedestrians, and harmless aliens and robots (including Ugnaughts, an R2 unit and a C3-PO) whom you can choose to either mercilessly slaughter (a good way to practise your sabre-work), or simply ignore. Depending on how many you



For a character that only grows for half a second in *The Empire Strikes Back*, Bessak gets a big part.



“One of the most exciting single-player experiences you can buy.”

slay throughout the game, your nature will change from a distinctly whiter-than-white Yoda-style, to a relentlessly cruel Emperor-style bad guy.

And with this choice comes the different 'force' options. Dark Jedis, for example, can choose to learn destructive powers such as Vader's 'grip', or lightning bolts, while those on the light side can use the powerful 'persuasion', or 'blinding' amongst others. They initially seem to be a novelty, but come the end of the game you'll find them imperative.

And so to the weapons, and, in particular, the lightsaber. Truly an excellent and welcome addition to the game, the sabre's main plus point is its ability to deflect laser blasts when lined up correctly in front of an enemy. Taking on a couple of Stormtroopers with only your sabre to protect you is tremendously exciting. Or, indeed, even standing in front of an advancing AT-ST, successfully deflecting everything it fires at you.

Getting *Jedi Knight* right was never going to be easy, and although it is as compulsive, exciting, and challenging as we had any right to expect, there were always going to be slight let-downs.

First off is the game's engine, unfortunately still not as accomplished as *Quake's*, plus some of the weapons are

superfluous. Aside from the basic blaster and Stormtrooper rifle, it takes an age to discover new weapons, and when you do, a couple of them are unnecessary and badly animated (the grenades and concussion rifle in particular). Die-hard *Quake* fans might also be put off by *Jedi Knight's* sprawling levels dominated as they are by large open spaces and infinite drops. For those who've become acquainted with *Quake's* intimate, claustrophobic level design and moody lighting, *Jedi Knight's* bold palette and almost clinical appearance may well disappoint.

Ignore all comparisons though (if that's possible), and the full range and beauty of LucasArts' game will become clear. Sure, it's not as typically *Star Wars* as many of the sections in *Shadows Of The Empire*, but the game's whole look and feel becomes irresistibly compulsive with extended play.

The biggest disappointment is the multi-player aspect of the game. Deathmatch levels appear to have been thrown together with the minimum of thought, with weapons, power-ups, and barrels seemingly scattered at random throughout them. There seems to be little reasoning behind their layout, and they provide only limited enjoyment against human opponents. Much of this is due to the absence of darkness (which always makes for a more intense multi-player game in *Quake*), but it's also down to the weapons, which don't resonate with *Quake's* power, and the slightly odd animation of the opposing player's character.

These are pedantic quibbles, though, for *Jedi Knight*, as a good old-fashioned single-player game, will surprise, amaze and delight you in equal measure.

Buy it. Go on, force yourself.

MATTHEW PIERCE

Publisher	LucasArts
Developer	Ion Storm
Price	£45
Minimum System	PRO: 16MB RAM, 30MB2
Recommended	PIIIA, 3D card

Graphics Accelerator	Dynalyst 3D
Sound Support	48
Multi-Player	Modem, serial, network
Web Address	http://www.lucasarts.com
Release Date	Out now

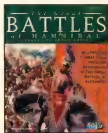
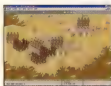
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 The best single-player *Quake*-style game you can buy.

91

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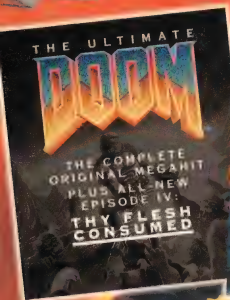


THE DEPTHS OF

DOOM

TRILOGY

15



THREE CD-ROM COLLECTOR'S SET

Zork Grand Inquisit



Adventuro

From GO NORTH, GO WEST to pointy-click, pointy-click. And yet some things never change...



ADVENTURE GAMES, EH? TSK. Their fundamental function is to make it as hard as possible for you to do the most simple things. The archetypal adventure game interaction, in fact, goes something like:

EAT BANANA

You'll have to peel it first.

PEEL BANANA

You cannot do that.

PEEL THE BANANA

I don't see that here.

OPEN BANANA

You cannot open the banana.

HIT BANANA WITH AXE

It has no effect.

TAKE PEEL FROM BANANA

How do you expect me to do that?

USE BANANA

Don't be ridiculous.

ARGHHHH

I don't understand.

REMOVE PEEL FROM BANANA

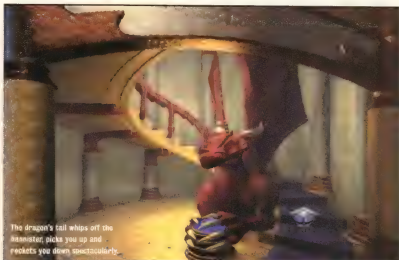
You peel the banana.

Modern graphic adventures are no better; every potentially useful object is concealed within a morass of visual detail, and instead of fighting with a sentence parser, you've got to point and click in exactly the right places, in exactly the right way, to make anything happen.

There's a teeth-grindingly typical example near the beginning of *Zork Grand Inquisitor*. Knock on a door, and a sliding panel reveals a face, which scrutinises you briefly before telling you to go away. Naturally, you knock a few more times, but each time you're rejected.

So you continue to explore the small fishing town in which you find yourself, and

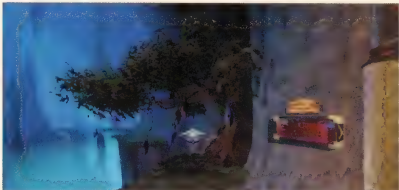
or



The dragon's tail whips off the mannequin, picks you up and rockets you down spectacularly.



(Left) The Dungeon Master's bedroom; there's a reversed version hiding in his mirror. (Above-left) Some of the scenery is laudably imaginative. (Above-right) En route to the spell factory. (Below) An umbrella tree.



us

after solving a rather neat, clever and subtly signposted puzzle concerning a tannoy system and a 'dead herring', you manage to acquire a lamp. Click on the door once more, however, and there'll be no new reaction. It's only when you select the lamp from your inventory, and then 'use' it on the door that you're allowed in.

On one level, this is a logical, legitimate puzzle. Jack the shopkeeper won't take any notice of you until you actually show him something he's interested in. On another, more human level, though, it's wilfully obstructive and plain annoying: it doesn't make sense in this context to 'use' the lamp on the door; why doesn't the game simply recognise that you've got the thing in your inventory – that you've solved the real puzzle – and let you proceed?

Because that's not how adventure games work. Nothing is easy. Nothing is natural. And

you can't take anything for granted. It takes a special kind of games player to find this 'fun'.

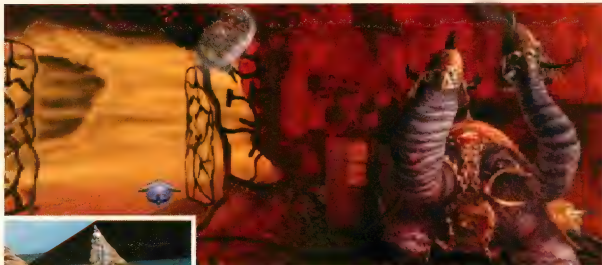
But if you are patient enough, observant enough and – I can't stress this too much – patient enough, then you'll find *ZG1* to be an interesting, intelligent and surprisingly entertaining addition to the adventure game

"It is, honestly, funny in places. I confess: I laughed."

canon. Within the given generic parameters, as explained, of it being unbelievably annoying from time to time, the game has a lot of fun, plays some enjoyable tricks and – a factor all-too-often ignored by many so-called adventure

games – is full of surprises, making you keen to explore and discover, spurred by the belief that, whatever you find, it will at least be different.

What really makes *ZG1* unique, though, is the way it's dealt with its heritage. The original *Zork*, as you probably know, was one of the earliest and most popular text-only adventure games. After several text-only sequels, though, it was clear that gaming technology was moving on and so, after a lengthy period of Zorkish absence, we were offered *Return To Zork*, one of the first CD adventures. It was still grappling with the new medium, had a too-complicated interface and some very silly acting, but sold prodigiously. Last year, you may remember, came *Zork Nemesis*, a heavily *Myth*-influenced title with luscious graphics, some simple but diverting puzzles and a very clever 360-degree panning view, whereby your virtual head is



(Left) A skeletal seaman pumps in vain. (Top) The sarcastic-tongued two-headed guardian of the gate to Hades.



virtually turned as you move your mouse pointer to one side or other of the screen.

The history of the adventure game as a genre, then, has effectively been mirrored in the development of the *Zork* franchise. And, fascinatingly, this latest instalment is a tongue-in-cheek re-appraisal of all the generic elements the series has popularised. It's the *Severn* of adventures, dripping with self-referential irony and highlighting the ridiculousness of generic conventions while also playing up to them.

And, yes, I know this is hard to believe – perhaps almost impossible – but it is, honestly, funny in places. I confess: I laughed.

There are loads of good gags about adventure gaming, from the cabinet containing hammer, map and sword marked "In case of adventure break glass" to the sarcastic voice-over message when you get particularly bamboozled: "Yeah – just try clicking through your inventory; *something's* gotta work." There's a character who jokes about having been in "Underground Adventure IV", and a number of amusingly titled yet puzzle-vital spells, including "Spell to turn purple things invisible", and "Spell to create the illusion of inclement weather". Even the installation program made me chuckle, explaining the buttons thus: "Press Continue to copy files. If you know anyone who doesn't know what Cancel is used for, shun them."

Okay, so maybe it's the way they tell 'em.

But, no, much of the game is genuinely amusing. Sure, it strays from humour into 'humor' from time to time, and the writers have an over-fondness for *Python*-esque

comments and characters which comes across as a bit sixth-form, but it's still a damn sight better than anyone else has managed for a long time – and a hugely welcome relief from the po-faced pretension of the leaden *Riven*.

And the plot? As the two-headed beast guarding the gates of Hades points out, tongues in checks: "You're an adventurer. You're looking for treasure, mana, crystals, red pages, blue pages – whatever. They're all the same." It's self-confessedly irrelevant.

There are a couple of clever plot devices, though, with the spirit of a 'Dungeon Master'

"A refreshing and enjoyable jaunt, full of variety, action and humour."

who accompanies you always on hand to keep up a steady stream of wryly ironic voice-over commentary, along with a combination of 'totems' – creature spirits compacted into hand-held artefacts for ease of storage – and 'time tunnels', which enables you to warp into the

bodies of other creatures. Oh, and the use of spells – which you collect, then add to your spell book – is cleverly integrated, and central to many of the puzzles. As a result, you spend a lot less time trawling through your inventory trying every item; it's more a question of making the connection between a seemingly obscure spell and a particular situation – the "cause the illusion of inclement weather" spell and the umbrella tree, for example.

Technically, too, *ZGI* is pretty on the ball. The 360-degree view works well, the graphics are all smartly colourful, there's a suitably atmospheric soundtrack, lots of superb special effects, and all the video footage and cut-scene animations are integrated into the game uninterruptively, with some style.

Taken all together, then, this adds up to a refreshing and enjoyable jaunt, full of variety, action and humour. It's no tile-matching block-sliding kiddie-unchallenging 'interactive movie', but a proper adventure; in fact, there's one superb puzzle which *looks* like a simplistic, irritating *Myst*-type problem, but then plays a superb joke on your expectations. You're going to have to keep your wits about you, because most of the puzzles are pretty hard.

Any problems? Well, it isn't all that long, a couple of the puzzles are super-tough in their bizarreness, and the constant jovial banter does start to wear after a while.

But, generally, this is a surprisingly playable and occasionally inspired game. There's a great bit where you go through a mirror and everything's reversed, even the controls. And a good joke about voicemail.

And it's got a castle on legs.

A castle on legs. Hilarious.

ION SMITH



Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

Graphics Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
A clever, well-made, ironic
and genuinely funny take on
the adventure game genre.

84

rotten 2 the core

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annihilate complete strangers.

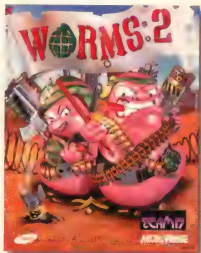
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Myth

Like PVC pants, *Myth* looks fun but it's all gloss.

EVEN AS I SIT HERE WRITING now, I cannot believe the sorry tale I must tell. A tragic story of woe, of youthful promise dashed by unjust execution, of a bad game.

We at PC GAMER, like a kindly guardian with a soft spot for real-time strategy, had watched the progress of *Myth* for many moons. Watching it grow from a handful of screenshots into a powerful 3D engine capable of besting all its peers in trials of rendering. We marvelled at its mastery of particles, at the whimsical manner in which it would throw snow and rain around the screen according to the laws of physics, and we smiled indulgently as it followed this with showers of blood, arms, legs, and finally, heads.

Perhaps this was our mistake. We were bewitched by *Myth*'s handsome looks. Truly they have no equal in all the strategy realm. Even without the application of 3Dfx, *Myth* has a divine countenance. It conjures up villages and majestic 3D landscapes effortlessly while retaining its swiftness. Nevertheless a heavy price has been paid. *Myth* has no soul.

All the while I was playing *Myth*, thinking "how lovely thou art", it was offering me no gaming pleasure at all. It's meant to deliver savage, real-time medieval bloodbaths but is ruined by narcoleptic combat. Using a mouse-driven interface distantly related to, but far more



Illusional



complicated than, C&C's.

Myth encourages the use of terrain and preset formations like phalanxes to gain the advantage over the foe. The idea is to win engagements decisively and preserve your men, not to fight to the last, exhausted, spleen-spattered goblin.

That's all well and good, but when everyone's lined up and you shout "go" nothing particularly exciting ensues. Your men walk, not charge, into combat and then hack at each other with

mechanical, repetitive animations. They fight for all the world like wind-up toys. They're better off dead—when they fall apart into attractive chunks. It may well be that *Myth* is hoisted on its own petard, for it's only natural to expect the battles to live up to the scale of the beautiful 3D world, but they never stimulate the visceral thrills that even the tiny sprites of *Warcraft II* offer. No matter how tactical the conflict, excitement is the essence of fighting and its loss is a fundamental flaw.

"Unravelling the scenarios feels more like puzzle-solving."

The purely tactical side of the game does become more apparent after some considerable time but, often, unravelling the scenarios feels more like puzzle-solving. You'll command on average 30 men per mission. But the tasks are so finely balanced that if you lose 10 or 15 in one engagement, you're pretty much stuffed in the next. The result: intensive reloading of saved games and frustration. War, after all, is folly, so you should be allowed to recover from mistakes. Thus, do not be fooled, *Myth* may look the comely maiden but it won't make you live happily ever after.

MARK DONALD



Maximum zoom-out is the only view that works. It's still not far enough but saves the engine having to draw too much.



Publisher

Developer

Price

Minimum System

Recommended

Graphics Accelerator

Sound Support

Multi-Player

Web Address

Release Date

PC GAMER

Why, oh why? Developers
Bungie snatch defeat from
the jaws of victory.

67%

Joint Strike Fighter

It looks beautiful, but you won't find much lurking beneath the surface. A real shame.



Empty

The skies are horribly empty in Eidos' beautiful but seemingly incomplete and anaemic jet flight simulator.

IT MUST BE GETTING TRICKY TO find aircraft that have never been simulated on the PC before, but Eidos and Innerloop have done well to wangle two of them. The real-life 'Joint Strike Fighter' is a concept designed to replace many of the US armed forces' aircraft with one fighter that can be slightly modified to serve the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy at once. The two aircraft in contention for this lucrative military mega-spend are the Boeing X-32 and Lockheed Martin X-35, both utilising stealth technology and a directional engine nozzle with cooling systems.

Highly impressive deep-strike aircraft, then, but, sadly, they don't create the most fascinating of games. For deep-strike aircraft read loads of flying in empty skies, ignoring enemy aircraft because they can't see you so you don't want to give yourself away, and then diving down at the last minute to bomb a ground target. Or perhaps the same flying through the same empty skies, ignoring the

same aircraft you're meant to ignore, and letting loose with an air-to-air some 20 miles from the aircraft you're meant to shoot down.

And that's Eidos' *Joint Strike Fighter* in a nutshell. Apart from the unexciting dogfight option on the main screen (just a head-to-head with either missiles – a quick option; or cannon – the slow option), you are forced to jump straight into a campaign. There's no easy tutorial or familiarisation missions. The choice is straightforward: a little zip around the skies of Afghanistan – a simple series of missions where the Russians have invaded again (will they never learn?) – or endless fights above the forests of Colombia, the tricky campaign.

But what is so unusual about *Joint Strike Fighter* is the way in which the campaigns have been structured. There is no set of missions as we have had in the past – no briefing, no waypoints, no primary and secondary targets of opportunity. Instead, you are just shown a map littered with potential targets and the option to take out anything you fancy. For instance, if

Lovely sunsets and missile trails streaking across the planet's surface testify to the power of the engine, but not to the power of the mission designer's imagination.



The Joint Strike Fighter may be a formidable plane, but this is not a fitting game to fly it about in. If you want a futuristic flight sim this Christmas, DID have the market sown up.

you click on a ground target, a small screen might reveal what it is, its importance, and why you should blow it to pieces. You then either create your own waypoints to the target or ask the game to build them for you. Opt for the latter and you may find yourself bombing along valley floors or hiding at 40,000 feet. Whatever, you have little idea why you're doing it or what benefit it will have.

With the mission suitably planned it's off to the usual bomb loading section. Stealth aircraft means virtually no ordnance. Both models of JSF store the missiles and bombs within the craft's body, limiting you to a maximum four items. Alternatively, the wings can take extra missiles, but you might as well turn your in plane stereo up full and carry a large banner behind you for what the external missiles do to your stealth identity.

So you take off, point in the right direction, put the time compression up to 'times four' (which, annoyingly, has to be done through the menu system as there doesn't seem to be a shortcut key for it), fly 90-odd nautical

miles, try to bomb, probably get shot down or at least heavily damaged, and limp home again. With the mission successfully completed or otherwise, your debriefing is just as disappointing as the briefing. There's no indication of how you helped or what you achieved. Instead, the map reflects the route you took and symbols indicate any action

"No sense of satisfaction and no desire to succeed."

during the flight. With the debrief over, the map updates itself to represent the passage of time, with units shifting over a little bit more.

And thus, you continue to try to take out targets until it is deemed that you lost too many aircraft, at which point your game is over. There's no save facility to be found.

For all *Joint Strike Fighter's* virtually

unparalleled beauty – truly impressive visuals on a 3D-unaided PC – this is little more than the most basic showcase of Innerloop's graphical technology. The flight model is accurate and comprehensive, but the game is seriously lacking in more than the most basic entertainment value. Despite the claimed 2.4 million square miles of landscape, there is nothing in the game to really get your teeth into. You don't want to fly yet another similar mission, and you don't want to have to limp two-thirds of the way home only to run out of fuel once again and crash land. The on-board computer doesn't even bother telling you that you just about have enough fuel to get home. Instead, the spoken message "Scratch fuel" warns you that your engines are about to cut-out. Thanks.

There's no sense of satisfaction and no desire to succeed. And there's no indication of how you are progressing. It's almost as if Innerloop spent the entire development time getting the graphics spot on and then just had to bolt on what little game they could manage in the time. Bitterly disappointing. STEVE OWEN

Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

Graphics Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
Beautiful to look at,
technologically impressive, but
lacking almost any other appeal.

61.

Flying Corps Gold



It's taken a whole year to see the light of day, but this is what *Flying Corps* was always supposed to be.

WITH *F22 AIR DOMINANCE Fighter* just released by Ocean, but missing the bits they hoped would be finished in time, it's a bit worrying to realise that it took Rowan a further year to perfect their flight sim opus, the immaculate and romantic *Flying Corps*.

When the game appeared last year, everyone was disappointed to find that the multi player options had been taken out at the last moment. Like every other developer (with the notable exception of Id), Rowan's networking code just wasn't rugged enough to risk a deluge of technical support queries last Christmas. Nine months of testing seemed to settle the problems down, with a free patch released on the Internet over the summer.

Naturally, 3D cards became big business in 1997, and while *Flying Corps* doesn't have blanket support for all the makes available, the 3Dfx acceleration in *Flying Corps Gold* does the wait justice.

And apart from those obvious additions, *Flying Corps Gold* is just as I fondly remember it, and the perfect excuse to fly again. Dozens of bi- and tri-planes swooping through the air at a little over 120 knots, desperately manœuvring to fix their prey in their sights; letting rip with a

Oh, the pure unbridled romanticism of it all – *Flying Corps Gold* does away with 'Fire 'n' Forget' – refreshingly original.

Precious

cannon that jams as often as it fires.

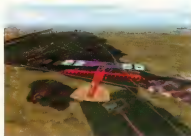
The missions are just as varied – patrols, attacks, defence, even bombing runs on trains or trucks. And while *Flying Corps Gold* usually involves you in endless action, there are times when, sadly, a patrol mission doesn't encounter any bogies whatsoever. Bit of a let-down.

Flying Corps Gold is so distinct to modern

“Deserves a place alongside the amazing F22 ADF.”

day flight simulators that it deserves a place alongside the amazing *F22 ADF*. In fact, if you have the cash, the temperament and the patience, you should own both. Like its jet sibling, *Flying Corps Gold* is the best of the genre, and remembering some of the amazing propeller sims that have passed – *Red Baron*, and Rowan's own *Down Patrol*, *Overlord* and *Navy Strike* – that is no mean feat.

Four compelling story-led campaigns and a series of single-player training missions will keep



Lovely scenery, lovely aeroplanes, but, sadly, absolutely no bridges to fly under: Shame that.

you playing for a long time, while a mission editor allows you to compile campaigns of your own. Be warned, though, that the missions are exceedingly tough. Try practising each one with some of the helpful options, like unlimited ammo, easy flight model and perhaps even invincibility. Or, pop on-line and learn your skills with human pilots (dogfighting or playing co-operatively) – chances are that they'll be slightly more fallible than the excellent computer opponents.

STEVE OWEN

Publisher

Developer

Price

Minimum System

Recommended

Graphics Accelerator

Sound Support

Multi-Player

Web Address

Release Date

PC GAMER

It's beautiful and it's multi-player... so what are you waiting for? Get to it, Tomkinson.

90

TAKE ON THE BIG GUNS

HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A BETTER STRATEGIST THAN HISTORY'S GREATEST GENERALS?



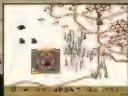
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Sid Meier's Gettysburg



(Above) Never before has a replay feature been so appreciated. (Above-right) A nice touch at the end of each scenario – the most effective and hardest fighting units are brought to your attention.

Look away Dixieland; it's another Civil War game.

Victories like this will probably earn you a rest day.

PC GAMER BRINGS YOU exclusive transcripts of a taped conversation inside a Virginia motel room on 25 August, 1996.

Voice 1 (Male, US accent, believed to be Sid Meier): I can do anything. Hell, I even made a game about steam trains and people loved it.

Voice 2 (Female, US accent, no assumptions dare be made): You just got lucky with *Railroad Tycoon*. It doesn't make you the world's greatest games programmer.

Voice 1: I sure am. Who else could have come up with *Civilization*? I'm the best and I'll prove it. You pick a subject and I'll make a best selling game about it.

Voice 2: Okay, you asked for it (PAUSE) The American Civil War.

Voice 1: That's unfair, it's just impossible.

Voice 2: You said you're the best.

Voice 1: (Tentatively) Okay, I'll do it.

The tape doesn't exist. That was pure fantasy. In fact, it was just one of many hypotheses floating around GAMER's office about what on earth possessed Sid Meier to focus his undoubted talents on a game subject which is traditionally ignored by the vast majority of gamers. The real reason? Who knows? Who cares? All that matters is that the game is here.

It centres on the three days that made up the battle of Gettysburg. You can take control of either side in a campaign game, which is

Address

"You can play the game without even looking at the manual."

essentially a series of linked scenarios that follow the historical course of the battle. You move from one area of the battle to another chronologically, and defeat in one encounter doesn't bring the campaign to an end, but, instead, the events have an effect on what happens next and what condition your troops are in. A series of decisive victories can even bring about a premature surrender, with no need to fight on the third day. If this is not to your liking, you can fight any of the 26 scenarios individually. All this takes place across an attractive and accurately reproduced 3D battlefield in real-time.

The overall impression is of a very polished

game. You can play the game without even looking at the manual as four simple tutorials with on-screen advice and instructions enable you to grasp the principles of the game within minutes. Also, the multimedia links are informative and relevant, adding to the atmosphere – generals discuss tactics before each scenario and you even get different accents according to which side you're commanding.

Victory objectives and key information about specific units are highlighted before each battle, there are four difficulty levels, and you can dictate whether the campaign follows a historical or randomised path. On top of this you can even control the personality of your computer opponent, ranging from aggressive and direct to cautious and indecisive, giving the game good longevity.

Commands can be issued at regimental level, or you can use Brigade commanders to issue orders to larger bodies of troops, all from a simple 'orders' bar at the bottom of the screen. However, things can sometimes get a bit



(Above) The limited variety of troops will always ultimately restrict Civil War games.

ing

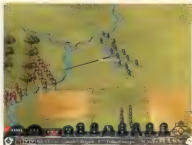
"The multi-player facilities are a joy."

confusing in real-time; despite the various game speeds and pause option, you can still miss vital parts of the battle as you focus on one regiment, wheeling them round and round, advancing and halting, while they mess about in Dad's Army fashion trying to get in the right position and formation. Consequently, this is the first game where I've regularly used the replay facility to see what actually happened on the rest of the battlefield. With practice, the troops can be controlled more efficiently and the initial debacles were amusing rather than disheartening.

The multi-player facilities are a joy. Up to eight players can slog it out in a variety of ways: team games are highly entertaining and

accurate, with players controlling different brigades or regiments as you see fit, and you can even split one army into eight commands and all take on the computer.

Where the game falls down is that you cannot click on opposing units and obtain information about them. Accurate? Yes. Fog of war? Yes. Frustrating? Yes. Quite often, though, you find your regiments standing toe to toe with the enemy for several minutes, exchanging volley fire, without any idea of how the combat is going. Your morale bar tells you whether your troops are about to retreat, but it would really have helped if the ability to view the enemy's morale had been included. It detracts from an otherwise excellent game. JASON WESTON



(Top) The on-screen tips and tutorials are superbly instrumented. (Above) Cavalry? No, it's not a mistake. They fought Dragon style; on foot.

Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

English Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Hot Keys	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
Civil War enthusiasts of all levels should make this top of their Xmas list.

82

NHL 98

It's a little known fact that criminal psychologists use the question "Is Puck a Shakespearean character, or a small plastic disk?" to produce profiles of serial killers.

FOR A SPORT WHICH IS followed in this country by as few people as actually play it, EA Sports' NHL series has always performed surprisingly well since its conception.

The reason being that ice hockey, as it's played out on your PC, is an easy-to-learn, fast-paced and violent game – like a more interesting rendition of the field version, only featuring more body armour and fights.

It's obvious that EA Sports' team of programmers have been kept busy re-modelling this season's players again, but aside from that we've also got some nifty cut-scenes, including superlative animations for team members being sent off, the huge fights that erupt, and interesting camera angles for replays.

The speed of the action – the most

important ingredient for a hockey sim – is better still than last year's offering, with the new game engine allowing the players to bomb around the rink, performing crunching tackles and lightning quick passes.

It's the animations, though, which set NHL apart from the crowd. The teams' individuals move beautifully, and from the top-down viewpoint you really could be forgiven for thinking you were watching a video of a game. Even the referee (is that what he's called?) skates around in realistic fashion, desperately jumping out of the way of the puck when it comes too close to him, and falling flat on his arse when you mow him down; accidentally, of course.

As far as the actual game plays, though, it appears, from what I remember of the earliest Mega Drive version, that aside from a little extra



Scoring is difficult, but by no means impossible. It's best to split the defence with lots of short passes first.

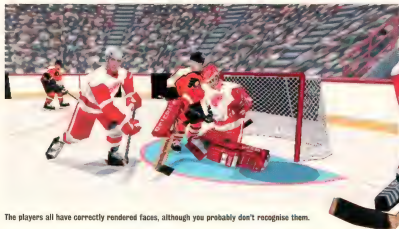
game speed and clarity on the rink, the tactics and their results remain the same; a slow build-up, finished off with a thunderous shot under the keeper's legs, still seems to do the trick.

It's also rather annoying to find that the system of shooting hasn't been changed since the previous games. Passing is still as easy and intuitive as it's always been, with multiple inch-perfect advances through the team, simple and satisfying, but come the time for shooting, it appears that no matter how long you wind-up for the 'big one', it's really rather random how much force or height is applied to the puck.

The options, stats and presentation are all we've come to expect from EA Sports – an incredible intro, more leagues, tournaments and

Pucka

"You could be forgiven for thinking you were watching a video of a game."



The players all have correctly rendered faces, although you probably don't recognise them.

Publisher
Developer
Price
Minimum System
Recommended



Graphics Accelerator
Sound Support
Multi-Player
Web Address
Release Date



PC GAMER
A cracking game of... wait for it, ice hockey. Better than last year's, but only just.

81%

"He Was Always Such A Nice, Quiet Boy."



What Went Wrong?



POSTAL

Find out at www.gopostal.com

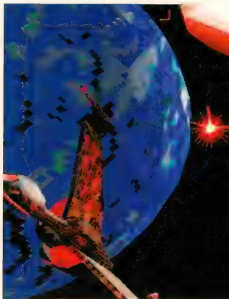


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Published by Take 2 Interactive Software Europe, Hogarth House, 29-31 Sheet Street, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 1BY

Star Trek: Starfleet Academy



Warp Factor 8 – beam us up – phasers to stun – engage the cliché factory, Mr Formica...



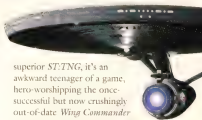
BLAME GEORGE LUCAS, IF YOU like, for showing how it *should* be done. Because all Star Wars PC games are produced by the same company, sharing personnel and expertise from hit to hit, with LucasArts an intimate and integral part of Georgie's film-creating empire, almost every title has been inordinately ace.

Star Trek games, on the other hand, have had a much bumpier ride. The licence to create PC titles based on the world's most popular sci-fi TV show has flitted around for years now, never quite coming to rest satisfactorily in any one place. Characters have been uncomfortably transported into several different genres, encompassing Interplay's early not-bad-but-slightly-behind-the-times pointy-clicky adventures, a couple of ill-advised FMV white elephants from Viacom and a bandwagoning 3D shooter from MicroProse.

No-one's managed to hit triple-A Trek paydirt, so there's never been a really solid base on which to build the successive generations of a gaming dynasty.

And so to Interplay, again – and, sadly, another Trek title lacking the confidence and personality to be a truly great game. *Starfleet Academy* isn't bad – in some respects, even, it's quite good – but ultimately it's an unsatisfactory cobbling together of stolen formulae and half-baked new ideas which, in its trying-too-hard rush to keep up with technical developments in game design, never takes the time to think things through.

Based on the original series, rather than the



superior *ST:TNG*, it's an awkward teenager of a game, hero-worshipping the once-successful but now crushingly out-of-date *Wing Commander* series far beyond the bounds of sense, and blowing the potential of its own original features in an ungainly, insecure muddle of compromises and missed opportunities.

As gangly MacGyver lookalike Cadet Forrester, you lead your predictably personality clash-prone crew through more than 20 missions in the Academy's 'simulator'. The

"Lacking the confidence and personality to be a truly great game."

variety of challenges on offer is one of the game's greatest strengths, and the flexible control you're offered over the ship's systems, from phaser array setting and system power channelling to damage control, affords some entertaining and original moments – as you intervene in a fight between two freighter captains, for example, or battle an unknown enemy in a view-obscuring ion storm.

But almost every mission comes down, eventually, to a series of *Wing Commander*-style battles. The level of graphical detail on the ships is nice enough, especially if you've got a 3Dfx card, but there's no getting away from a seen-it-all-before sense of vague weariness, as you chase renegade vessels around your *Elite* style scanner. And it's certainly not *I-War*. You're piloting hefty starships, rather than fighters, so there's a slight sluggishness to your manoeuvrability and there's an underdeveloped sense of 3D space compared to the majesty of the LucasArts space simulators.

A plethora of other details are disappointingly off-whack. The multi-station bridge layout is far too unwieldy, for example, and should've been abandoned at a very early stage of development. Near options such as the ability to choose where your phasers are aiming at an enemy's hull are, in actuality, impossible to access in the heat of battle. Keyboard shortcuts for some functions alleviate the problem to a degree, but also prove how misjudged this interface really is. In addition, it means that the cockpit of every hull structure looks exactly the same, even for alien vessels in the multi-player battles.

Individual missions unfold pleasingly, but can also be overlong, so you'll find yourself

ademy



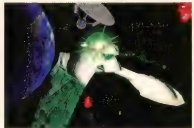
The leafy grounds of the Academy are a far cry from the inky blackness of deep space, but said void is recreated in the school's simulator. So this game is simulating a simulator, which adds an edge of unreality.



ksome



Break plasma havoc on a variety of Romulan and Klingon vessels, as well as freighters and mysterious 'other' ships.



repeating early segments many times to defeat a final challenge - most frustratingly in the ion storm mission. Other niggles include a hopelessly wimpy depiction of your own destruction should you get killed.

For all that, though, it's still fun to play - as most of the Trek games have been - for one simple reason: being 'in' Star Trek is hugely enjoyable. The characters, situations, language

and sound effects are so familiar that we instantly feel at home. And in this case, the 'look and feel' of the interfaces is absolutely spot-on. Indeed, the illusion of TV show participation is taken to a new level of plausibility by *Starfleet Academy's* between-mission video sequences.

Exactly as in the most recent *Wing Commander* games (of course), there are intermittent choices to be made through these

cinematic confections, affecting the way your crew responds to your leadership (and, we're told, choosing which one of the three different endings you're finally treated to). But instead of dealing with the shallow stereotypes of Chris Roberts' childish mind, this time you're 'interacting' with the shallow stereotypes of Gene Roddenberry's childish mind... in the right costumes and *everything*. Brilliant!

There are even appearances from three make-up-caked stars - William Shatner, George Takei and Walter Koenig - to enhance the effect. And the cumulative result is that you genuinely care about the consequences of your actions. You wear a Starfleet uniform, you know the protocols from hundreds of hours of TV watching, and you can't let Kirk down. The thrill when Shatner himself says you've done "exceptionally well" after a successful mission is undeniable.

One final warning, though: I had to buy a new hard disk to play *Starfleet Academy*, as it requires 200Mb-odd of space just to install.

Is it worth it? Nearly.

JON SMITH

Publisher	
Developer	
Video	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

Graphics Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
Good in parts, and tries hard to be original, but never quite pulls it all together.

79

Pax Imperia

Man vs Machine. No contest. The future for flesh looks bleak in *Pax Imperia*.

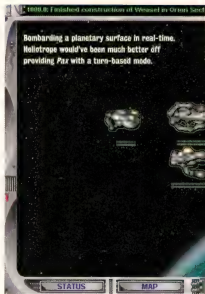
THOUGH I'VE NEVER MET anyone with a brain the size of a planet, I've met quite a few with an ego the size of the Universe. They're particularly pain on their birthdays. What do you get the person who thinks they're everything?

One year you might try them with *Pax Imperia*. It presents all the grandiosity the frustrated megalomaniac could ask for, and I should know. The stage is the entire universe. The role is budding Supreme Ruler of the Cosmos. It is, no doubt, an idea with universal appeal. Unlike the gameplay.

Pax is a slow-burning strategy game in the same vein as *Fragile Alliances* and *Masters Of Orion 2*. From a planet-sized acorn you can propagate a star spanning empire by colonising worlds, exploiting new technology, designing spaceships, fighting alien races, striking treaties and so on. It all happens riotously via the medium of menus. Menus replete with economic indicators, R & D trees, foreign policies, ship schematics, etc. It's the kind of game that would come in handy if you were banged away for a long stretch, otherwise work/other people/eating tend to interrupt your struggle.

While getting into other games of this ilk is like trying to guess someone's personality from the bumps on their head, *Pax* is easier to slip into than a vat of crème fraîche. Running the show has been reduced to the statistical essentials; setting the parameters for expansion is a doddle and even the interface comes in peace. Almost immediately you're sticking your flag in to every virgin world you clap eyes upon.

But there's a good reason why *Pax* is so much simpler and slicker than *MOO2*. The



Uneasy

"The moment you engage... you lose control of the game."

entire game plays in real-time, baby. This 'advance' is meant to be *Pax*'s quantum leap. In truth, it's a tragic flaw. Previously, the space strategy genre has remained unflappably turn based. *Pax* handsomely demonstrates the utter righteousness of this archaic wisdom, the first moment you make contact with AI aliens.

While your cumbersome human brain is struggling with the demographics of Vega IV and existential anxieties like "Did I leave the oven on?", the AI is systematically destroying your empire with all the confidence of a lifetime whose only concern is 0 or 1. Have a little think about designing a new ship to combat the menace, look up, and 20 years have

elapsed, while the little RAM raider is all over you like a cheap suit.

It's not feasible, in a game of this complexity, to enjoy its strategic nuance and take on the computer. The moment you engage, there's no time to think about anything, the *raison d'être* of these games, and you lose control of things. Moreover, the real time premise has encouraged the inclusion of a combat section that amounts to a second-hand *Starcraft*. It's dreadfully slow, unexciting and unnecessary. Just being a sub game is no excuse. If it can't be done as well as the games it apes, then another solution should be found.

Before contact, the game feels turn-based as you ponder the big decisions and there's nothing wrong with that. Taking time over the fate of the Cosmos is to be encouraged. But Heliotrope, with their dash to real-time, have annoyingly hamstringing an otherwise enjoyable and accessible space strategy game. Boo.

MARK DONALD



A particularly gripping moment during a recent game.

Publisher
Developer
Price
Minimum System
Recommended

Graphics Accelerator
Sound Support
Multi-Player
Web Address
Release Date

PC GAMER
A black hole of a game: it draws you in then crushes with its real-time pressure.

70

"The best C&C clone in the universe."

PCFORMAT

"The best C&C clone
in the universe."

The Mirror

"Out-of-this-world
action game."

NetGamer

"The missions are excellent for one player,
but very few games are as much fun in
multi-player mode."

FOCUS

"Dark Colony is clearly in a
galaxy of its own."



**ULTIMATE
PC**

"The gameplay is gripping and
far more challenging than C&C,
the graphics are gorgeous and
the network game is quite
simply brilliant."

PC review

"As the sons-of-Red-Alert face off to
fight for the crown, Dark Colony has
effectively kneed all its opponents
between the legs. A manoeuvre
worthy of Jackie Chan, consider-
ing just how many oppo-
nents it faces, *Dark Reign*,
Conquest Earth,
Starcraft....."

PC GAMER

"Large-scale graphics that
blow away anything the genre's
seen until now. It's got enough
originality to stand out
from the herd."

PC HOME

"Take 2 has managed to do
just what Westwood couldn't
with the troop movement. It gets
the thumbs-up, with enough of a
different feel from C&C to make it
enjoyable to play."

**COMMANDING RESPECT
CONQUERING ALL**



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GET REAL GET RALLY



The best got even better! International Rally Championship – successor to the chart-topping RAC Rally Championship – roars onto the PC with an immaculate pedigree and a breathtaking collection of new features.

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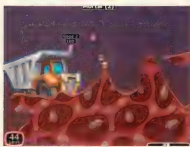
Europe House, Adlington Park, Marstonfield, SK10 4NP, England.
Tel: 01625 (+44 1625) 859444 Fax: 01625 (+44 1625) 879962
Web site: <http://www.europress.co.uk>

International
Rally
Championship

Worms 2



Friends of the gardener and the fisherman they may be, but you wouldn't try to stick a hook through Team 17's little fellas.



Each of the levels has a recognisable graphical theme. Above you have the cheese and construction yard levels.



Hooked

IT'S TIME TO SET THE RECORD straight. When the original *Worms* – a highly original, turn-based combat game starring Annelids – was reviewed in PCG 25, angry young man Stuart Campbell awarded what many thought to be one of the most refreshing and addictive games of the year, a paltry 40%.

Let's face it, Team 17's original effort would undoubtedly struggle in today's games market, with its minuscule sprites, awkward control system and glitchy game engine, but it was sufficiently different and as compulsive a multi-player game as you could hope for at the time.

So, has the period spent updating, overhauling and generally tweaking its tweakable bits been well spent?

Well, sort of. For although *Worms 2* is a feast for the eyes

and a number of changes have been made to the control system, and weaponry, the sequel remains fundamentally a glitzy-up version of the original, which I enjoyed immensely.

Most importantly, the turn-based method of play is still present; many assumed that a real-time mode would have been implemented, or at least a mixture of the two systems. The developers have, however, opted to stick with the turn-based method, and while *Worms 2* is an obvious improvement over its predecessor in many ways, one can't help but wish that the modifications had been more sweeping.

Cosmetically, the game is as far removed from the original as Michael Jackson is now from his ABC days. A completely new engine has been written, which manipulates the play area superbly smoothly, while the graphics are far more stylised, cartoony, and generally more clear than the minute, almost *Lemmings*-like sprites of the original. Animations are also key to the game's character. *Worms* now grin mischievously, sigh with resignation, and turn blue with rigor mortis – all in a nicely comical fashion that fits the outlandish premise behind it perfectly.

The arsenal of weapons at your disposal is also far greater, providing a plethora of ways with which to blow up, ignite, flatten, shoot, ➤





Teleports are still vital to the game; hiding a worm in a safe, high cave space can be the key to victory as the water level gradually rises after a certain amount of time.

or punch your opponents into defeat. They are all accessed via a far more simplified, less intrusive (and much easier to negotiate) menu, which appears on the screen with the click of your right mouse button – in it you'll find all manner of hostile equipment, as well as those devices designed for escape purposes.

Many, of course, remain the same – and the bazooka, grenades (both cluster and standard), and the dynamite are still the most oft-used early on, but now you'll also discover the Holy Hand Grenade, The Concrete Donkey, and The Old Woman – all nonsensical weapons with suitably bizarre accompanying graphics, that, when collected from crates, cause mass destruction.

The most novel new addition to the combat concerns the simultaneous use of weapons and equipment. The Ninja rope, for instance, can be used to swing huge distances across levels (scenery permitting), and mines, dynamite, or even sheep can be dropped onto enemy worms' heads mid-swing.

A very welcome addition is the brilliantly simple game editor, allowing you to create your own levels, manipulate the look and power of weapons, and even meddle with computer and crate AI; the latter meaning that

health crates, when they fall, land close to worms in dire need of them.

For all these great changes, though, there are weaker additions, and some niggling problems that remain present from the original. The scenery can still be problematic at

"One can't help but wish that the modifications had been more sweeping."

times, meaning a bazooka, fired in what seems to be a safe trajectory, often hits a pixel-sized piece of landscape next to you, blowing you sky-high in the process.

Very frustrating. The power and wind bars have also been changed unnecessarily – wind is now represented by detritus blowing

around the screen – a superfluous and confusing graphical effect, the downside of which the programmers must have recognised, as a separate wind bar is still in evidence.

The relative power of your shots has also been altered from a strength bar to a trajectory indicator next to your worm – it's nowhere near as clear as the original's far simpler method, though, and means that gauging the same amount of strength for subsequent shots is more of a skilful process than before.

As far as computer AI goes, single-player games still appear to be either frustratingly difficult or absurdly simple, but *Worms* always worked best as a multi-player game, and its sequel is no different in that respect.

Worms is, of course, massively limited – you'd be foolish to sit down and play it by yourself (or arguably) when you're sober. However, that would defeat the whole point of it. This is a game to play with friends more than even *Quake* is, and it's preferable to play it late in the evening for hours and hours. Then, and only then, does it become a great game.

NATHAN JONES



Publisher	Team 17
Developer	Team 17
Price	£19.99 / \$24.99
Minimum System	PC 100MHz, 16MB RAM
Recommended	PC 133MHz, 32MB RAM

Graphics Accelerator	None
Sound Support	None
Multi-Player	None
Web Address	None
Release Date	None

Notes	None
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PC GAMER
Some may find it hateful, but the simplicity of the two-player mode ultimately wins me over.

90

actua GOLF 2

the real tiger has arrived

Some have said that a particular young American has come along and taken the world by storm this year. We know better. The release of Actua Golf 2 on PC CD-ROM presents a challenge unrivalled in the golfing calendar.

Take on eight gruelling courses, including the world famous Kiawah Island Ocean Course, Carnoustie Championship Links and The Oxfordshire.

Each course is set within a stunning True3D playing environment, giving you total freedom of movement from tee to pin.

Motion captured professional golfers provide superb player movement and action.

The range of shot and club selection allows you to take on all conditions.

The interaction between commentators Peter Alliss and Alex Hay provides a true golfing experience.



Taken from PC CD-ROM Version



actua
SPORTS
SERIES



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Death Without^{is} Nothing Torment

Death would be too easy.

Too little to repay a
thousand year old debt.

Too quick to satisfy the hunger of one you
betrayed and left to the ravages of the Mages
in another millennium.

Before **Lore Thane** extracts

his terrible price on your body and **soul**, you are
bound to wander through five worlds of atrocity.

Stoking your **powers**. Solving infernal mysteries.

Gathering **magic** and arcane knowledge.

Fighting your way through **Fear** into Madness
for one last desperate struggle against **Evil**, himself

Only then will he **anoint you** with the
last
sacraments of your torment.

No. **Death** would be too easy.



Intense action.
Seamless roleplaying.
3D malevolence
from the creators of
HEXEN and HEXEN II.

PC CD-ROM



Postal



The bloke on the right's throwing grenades, the girl at the top's shooting bullets and the Postal Guy in the middle wants 26p because the sender didn't pay the full amount.



Second-class

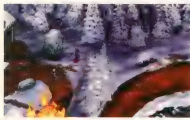
The press are going to have a field day with this one, but try not to get sucked in by the hype.

CAST YOUR MIND BACK TO 1986 – what were you doing? Being born? Doing your 'A' levels? Drawing your pension for the first time? If you were an Oklahoma postal worker, you'd have been blowing seven shades of shinola out of your fellow posties. Fifteen of 'em to be precise – killed dead with guns. And bullets.

Hence the phrase "going postal", slang for going on a violent rampage.

Hence the game "Postal", slang for shamelessly violent but not particularly well executed run-around-and-shoot-'em-up.

Star of this sordid affair is Postal Guy, an out-of-control but under-your-control psycho whose sole aim in life is to kill, kill and then – just for good measure – kill again. Whack 80 per cent of the baddies on each isometric level



Snow joke being Postal Guy. For some reason, all the girl cops get shotguns. At least, they squeal like girls.

and it's on to the next, where more gun-toting, missile-launching, flame-throwing foes lie in wait. Luckily, the streets are literally littered with weapons and ammo, ensuring

"The screams and burning people were done better in Syndicate."

you've got all the hardware you need to send your enemies off to the great mail route in the sky.

Even though *Postal*'s ambition to provide non-stop violence is a modest one, it still doesn't deliver. Its third-person perspective and small characters mean it's nowhere near as visceral as *Quake*, and the screams and burning people have been done better in games like *Syndicate*. What's worse, it's very easy to work out how to beat *Postal* – it takes a few levels to suss out how best to use each of the weapons and then you can swiftly rattle through the first dozen or so missions (there are 15 in total). From then on it gets harder, not because the levels are better designed

but because the enemies are more prolific and all of a sudden they can shoot faster.

Postal's not trying to do anything more than *Syndicate* did better five years ago. If anything, by giving you only one character and having no strategy element, it's trying to do less. The level editor and multi-player options are a bonus, but they'd only be of interest if the game itself was sound, which it isn't. It's pretty much unplayable on a P133 and is even prone to the occasional sputter on a P200, especially when there's lots of action on screen.

And then, he said as he climbed on his high horse, there's the question of whether or not we want to play games like *Postal* anyway.

At the acceptable end of the spectrum you have out-and-out fantasies like *Quake* – mega-violent, extremely gory, but clearly made up. At the other end you have the unquestionably abhorrent *Doom*-style shoot-'em-up based on the Dunblane massacre that was banned by Internet service provider Virgin Net.

And in the enormous grey area in-between, you have *Postal*, a game loosely based on real events but done with a dose of albeit heavy-handed black humour. Clearly, it's just a game, but you can quite understand why the relatives of that Oklahoma postal worker's victims might not be too enamoured by its existence. And the final sequence is shocking. Is nothing sacred? (Answers on a postcard to the usual address.)

RICHARD LONGHURST



Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

Graphics Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
Ultimately unsatisfying shoot-'em-up that delivers less than *Syndicate* did five years ago.

54

THE GREATEST PLAYER EVER...



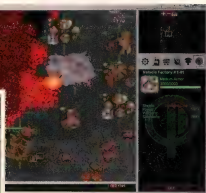
be **Sensible**

Outpost 2

The sins of *Outpost* are well documented. Wholesale changes have been made for the sequel, but is it enough?

A CHILD HAS DIED. MORALE IS falling. One of your structures has just gone off-line due to insufficient workers. Your scientists are unhappy at having to carry out menial work. An ion storm has just wiped out your vehicle factory. Welcome to *Outpost 2*.

In a turn-based environment this would cause all but the most hard-nosed strategists problems. *Outpost 2* has been transformed from the original into real-time. It's nervous breakdown time. Or it would be if the survival of Eden, or Plymouth, the two colonies you can choose to take control of, really mattered. The rather tempting alternative is to turn your computer off and play something less frustrating, like Russian roulette. Unless, of course, you are on your own – Russian roulette just doesn't have the same appeal played solitaire. As this was the case, I decided to restore my colony to a state of well being. Repairs were carried out. Nurseries were built. Recreational centres improved morale and consequently the workers worked harder and played harder, resulting in more babies. Medical centres reduced the



Simplistic graphics, hellishly complex morale system. *Outpost 2* is a great opportunity wasted. Again.

Wrong

"Play something less frustrating, like Russian roulette."

mortality rate and the scientists had just finished researching a Bioptronics database, whatever that may be. Things were starting to look good. The long list of mission objectives began to appear obtainable. Then a volcano erupted nearby and a red tide of lava swept across the whole colony. Mission Failed.

Despite its frustrations there are many aspects to *Outpost 2* that draw your attention and convince you to persevere with the game. As missions progress night sweeps across the planet's surface, changing strategic considerations. All your vehicles come equipped

with headlights, which you can switch off to make half-speed surprise attacks at night. Unit-based missions enable you to forget the nightmare of resource management for a while and concentrate on destroying the enemy. When a mission is completed you are rewarded with not only the customary FMV clip but you also gain access to the next chapter of a novella, which accompanies the game. If the structured 24-mission campaign doesn't suit your taste, you can play either of the colonies in a more open campaign, which has a few long-term goals, such as launching a spaceship to colonise a new planet.

The biggest problem with *Outpost 2* is morale. It's an amazing and complex system, but requires far too much of your attention to appreciate the other aspects of the game. Repel an enemy attack and morale goes up. Blow up an enemy medical centre or nursery and your colonists become irate, effectively crippling your colony. Sierra have thrown a host of good ideas into *Outpost 2* in an attempt to eradicate the shame they must have felt about the original. The result is a game that delights, overwhelms, frustrates, disappoints and confuses, all at once.

JASON WESTON



Build your base, attack the enemy, and just pray that a volcano doesn't erupt, ruining all your good work.



Publisher	Sierra
Developer	Sierra
Price	£49.99 / \$49.99
Minimum System	PC: 486, 2MB RAM, VGA 256K
Recommended	PC: 386, 4MB RAM, VGA 512K

Graphics Accelerator	3Dlabs Voodoo
Sound Support	Sound Blaster
Multi-Player	Multi-Player
Web Address	http://www.sierra.com
Release Date	1997

PC GAMER
A change from the immediacy of other real-time games, but far from refreshing.

57

THE GREATEST GAME EVER...

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Excalibur 2555AD

It's Lara with a sword. And it's not quite the same.



The bartender questions you over your dress code, and the fact that your sword looks like a garden trowel.

LARA CROFT REALLY DOES have a lot to answer for. Because apart from giving thousands of confused adolescents several sleepless nights, her dominance in the PC gaming world (and now even featuring in men's lifestyle magazines) has led to this *Tomb Raider*-inspired travesty.

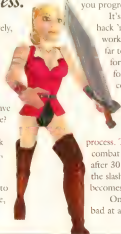
Excalibur 2555AD features a weapon-toting (this time it's a big sword), large breasted woman, who runs around the 3D levels trying to

"More of a chore than an enjoyable and compulsive process."

out-Lara the icon herself. Unfortunately, she falls way short of the mark.

The plot which allows for this svelte female has you assuming the role of Merlin's daughter, and travelling forward in time in order to retrieve the mythical sword Excalibur from the evil villains that have stolen it from the future. Still with me?

So, armed with a blade (not Excalibur, though), you have to hack your way through thirteen 3D levels, destroying everything in your sight. That's it, right? Well, no, for in a brave but ultimately flawed attempt to add something different to the genre, *Excalibur 2555AD* adds RPG



Blunt

elements to the main theme. So, rather than simply slaying every living thing that you stumble across, you're obliged to engage people in conversation and help them solve their horribly pedantic problems. Only then can you progress to the next level.

It's an interesting addition to the hack 'n' slash theme, but doesn't really work, with many of the puzzles being far too tedious to warrant inclusion – for example, searching high and low for some medicine to help a complete stranger who's managed to break his leg, the silly old sod.

Progressing to the next level, therefore, is more of a chore than an enjoyable and compulsive process. This wouldn't be so bad if the combat itself was more innovative, but after 30 minutes of mindlessly stabbing the slash key, even the fighting action becomes seriously repetitive.

On the plus side, the graphics aren't bad at all, especially with the benefit of a



Try not to get trapped in a corner by an ogre. If you can't swing your sword, you're in all sorts of trouble.

3D card, and the characters – although unoriginal – are animated as well as you might hope. The environment, however, is painfully linear, as well as being far too samey all the way through. Thank God, then, that at least the game engine manages to keep proceedings running along fairly smoothly.

Regrettably, yet another game that's tried to blend role-playing elements with all-out action has failed miserably. Uninspiring, frustrating, and, in the long term, no fun at all. Old Arthur would be turning in his grave.

NATHAN JONES

Publisher	PC GAMER
Developer	PC GAMER
Price	£19.99
Minimum System	PC 95/98
Recommended	PC 95/98

Graphics Accelerator	3D
Sound Support	3D
Multi-Player	3D
Web Address	http://www.pc-gamer.com
Release Date	1999

PC GAMER
An excruciating attempt to blend *Tomb Raider* and *LOL2*. A gruelling experience to play.

48

THE GREATEST



2000



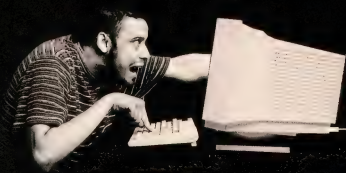
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Virus

So let me get this straight. Are you absolutely sure you want me to pretend that my PC has got a virus?



Oh, the endless tedium of it all. This guy here is sent out to cleanse infected files, so you can get the KBs.

GET ME SOME PENICILLIN quick, because this game has just made me seriously ill. I've got a skin rash where I've scratched my head in confusion. I've gone bald where I've torn my hair out in frustration. And I've got really smelly feet because I regularly wear soft canvas shoes.

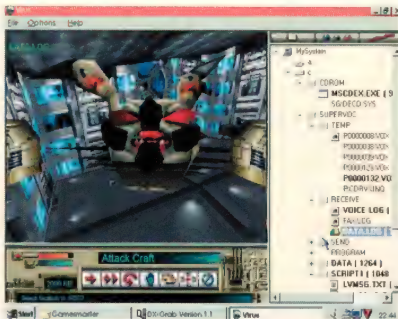
Virus, for all its well-meant combination of ideas, is almost shockingly unplayable. 1

"'Simplistic' is the buzzword when it comes to gameplay."

know the Israeli developers had high hopes for their brain child, but they have balled up on almost every level.

The idea, bear with it, is that your PC has been infected by a virus and you must eradicate it. But you are actually within your PC, Tron-style, and must traverse its endless filing system (represented by an Explorer copy on the right of the screen) in little vehicles destroying virus creatures and cleaning up infected files.

So while the game enjoys some simplistic *Doom*-style action, it also manages to drop in some simplistic C&C-style resource collection



This is the hideously terrifying virus attack craft. Remember getting scared playing *Doom*? This won't remind you.

Diseased

and management, and unit and building construction. Resources are kilobytes left lying around files, while buildings are vehicle factories, repair stations and your headquarters.

Oh, that's not just an example, by the way. That's it. And that's just one of *Virus*'s problems. 'Simplistic' is the buzzword when it comes to gameplay. Tactics are minimal and intelligence is negligible. None of the buildings or units have any form of self-defence, and finding the unit currently being shot at within

the baffling list of files is so tricky that they are inevitably wiped out before you can take control. Similarly, most buildings will be destroyed before you can get any defences to their aid.

Furthermore, each file is represented by a room, with different coloured doors leading to parent, sibling and child files, but in a panic situation you are unlikely to head off in the right direction. Many rooms look incredibly dull and similar, but rooms that represent graphics or text files display them on the walls (which is unhelpful, but vaguely interesting), while sound files are played as you enter. Which is pointless as it doesn't take long for the endless virus taunt of "I am going to kill you!" to force zero volume.

Virus has 15 levels, but you are unlikely to stick with it beyond Level 4 – the manual suggests that you have seen it all by then anyway – plus an interesting but unlikely to be exploited two-player option, where one is the virus, the other the computer, battling for available resources.

Essentially, though, *Virus* fails to do anything well enough to reserve it a table at the Modern Games Restaurant. STEVE OWEN



From within the KB Transformer (a bit like the Ore Refinery in *Red Alert*) you watch an attack craft. Great.

Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

Graphics Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
Not the world's worst idea, but it's been poorly implemented. You wouldn't want to play it.

35

C&C: The Aftermath



Westwood take us a disc too far with *The Aftermath*.

LIKE A FATALLY WOUNDED OLD hero, ridden with bullets and cornered by the enemy, *Red Alert* grits its teeth and vows to fight to the last. Expiring its last mortal breath, it expends every ounce of remaining strength hurling *The Aftermath* at us in the hope that it'll be in all our homes in time for Christmas.

Judging by the overwhelming popularity of the *Counterstrike* expansion disc, that is not an unreasonable proposition, but even Westwood appear to be admitting the game is up with *The Aftermath*'s self-referential title.

We're now past *Red Alert*. Just as in-between the last season of *The New Adventures Of Superman* Ten Hatcher passed over the threshold from flawless nymph to still enjoyable but rough around the edges, so *Red Alert* has

The sinister form of the mushroom cloud (above) marks the spot where the demolition truck used to be.

Done

dated with the arrival of fresh young things: *Dark Reign* and *Total Annihilation*. This march of time naturally reflects on the expansion disc. Playing *Red Alert* via *The Aftermath* now feels like retro gaming. Still a classic, but no longer gripping, it's only worth playing long enough to stir up nostalgic memories.

What's particularly telling is that

"Still a classic, but no longer gripping."

Westwood clearly have nowhere else to take the game. The missions in *Counterstrike* were eclectic and exciting; *The Aftermath* adds nothing new. This time there are 18 single-player missions and again they play individually. The difficulty level varies quite considerably but the well-seasoned will take everything in their stride.

Fortunately, due to massive civil unrest

last time, Westwood have taken more trouble over the new units. They're now integrated into the construction tree and play a full role in the multi-player game. They're well-balanced but hardly revolutionise the experience. The Allies' much-valued teleporting chrono-tank, for example, is still just tesla-fried along with all the rest the moment it pokes its snout into the Soviet base. The one unit that really does make a difference and should have been in *Red Alert* from the start is the missile-launching Sov sub, which is capable of bombarding inland with the efficiency of a cruiser. This unit alone cures Soviet hydrophobia.

Ultimately, if you're as attached to *Red Alert* as the Amish are to the plough, then you'll find everything here you're looking for. Indeed, like *Counterstrike* before it, with the new units, *The Aftermath* is sound value for an expansion disc. Unfortunately, it's an expansion disc for a game past its sell-by date. Time to move on.

MARK DONALD



A M.A.D tank going mad type event is the worst case scenario we're witnessing here. Loop-the-loop or what?

Publisher

Developer

Price

Minimum System

Recommended

Graphics Accelerator

Sound Support

Multi-Player

Web Address

Release Date

PC GAMER

A last gasp expansion disc for a game that's gone as far as it can. For completists only.

75

HALF-LIFE



www.sierra.com/titles/half-life

HALF-LIFE

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7th Legion

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John: I'll have *Total Annihilation*.

Dave: C&C: *Red Alert* then.

John: *Dark Reign*.

Dave: *Warcraft II*.

And so on. Somewhere down the order, past *Conquest Earth* and *Dark Colony*, is the gaming equivalent of the swotty, geeky kid. The one who everybody knows isn't that good and so never gets picked until the end. A bit like MicroProse's C&C-wannabe, *7th Legion*, in fact. A real-time, isometric, strategy wargame that

"The wide array of cards slightly makes up for the poor variety of hardware."

tries desperately hard to be good, innovative and additively playable, but is instead just fiddly, frustrating and decidedly average.

As you'd expect, *7th Legion* gives you all the familiar nuts and bolts – good vs bad, red vs blue, infantry units, mechanised armour, fog of war (a real pea-souper), base-building and multi-player options. There's a plot too, a futuristic tale of the rich (the Chosen) leaving a starving Earth in huge starships, before returning several hundred years later to reclaim it. In their absence humanity has struggled through, in the shape of seven armoured legions, of which the seventh is the most powerful. Play the Chosen and try to invade your former homeland, or the 7th Legion trying to defend it. Whatever side you pick, 40 difficult 'destroy enemy base' missions await your mouse-clicking, troop-managing pleasure.

Like its rivals too, *7th*



Fiddly

(Top) MechWarrior action on a top-down, real-time scale as blue battles red for control of the Earth.
(Above) Massing your troops C&C-style proves useless against any foe with a stack of Battle Cards.

Legion has an array of unit types – machine gunners and Slaven Riders (blokes sat on what look like big chickens) provide the cannon fodder, while different classes of tank and Mech can supply heavy fire. There's also the usual clutter of buildable structures, from troop-birthing barracks, to hospitals and automated vehicle factories. The addition of a high-tech lab allows commanders to upgrade armour-plating and weaponry, but take a step back and you realise that there isn't really anything here worth getting excited about.

Apart from the Battle Cards, perhaps, *7th Legion* has all the trappings of C&C but with the card-based hilarity of *Magic: The Gathering*. In each mission you can have up to five Battle Cards, which can be used to enhance your own side or to decimate and annoy your enemy. Battle Psychosis, for example, enables units to move and fire at double speed, Immolation is a

handy, troop-incinerating smart bomb, while Life Siphon sucks the energy from enemy units and uses it to heal your damaged ones. It's certainly original, and the wide array of cards slightly makes up for the poor variety of hardware. But rather than enhance the game's strategy, it ultimately makes it frustrating and annoying, so much so that a cunningly placed 'destroy-all-my-units' Immolation card will render your well-honed 'build-lots-of-troops-and-throw-them-at-the-enemy' tactics completely useless.

Of course, you may like the combination of these power-ups with your point-and-click military manoeuvring. Or, like me, you might find them somewhat unnecessary. The *Magic: The Gathering* influence is the one thing that sets *7th Legion* apart from the crowd, but it's just not nearly as much fun to play as *Total Annihilation* or the standard-setting C&C. It's simply average. In every possible way. As close to beating *Total Annihilation* as a one-legged man is to winning a 'who's got the best pair of legs' competition. DEAN EVANS



Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommended	

Engine Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

PC GAMER
The Battle Cards are a brief novelty, but this offers nothing you can't get better elsewhere.

70



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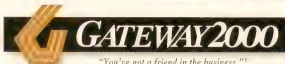


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International Rally Championship

After its almost anally precise relationship with bedfellows *Network Q* and *RAC*, this time the strumpet wants to sleep with the world.

ALTHOUGH A GOOD LOOKING and thoroughly enjoyable racing sim, last year's hit *Network Q RAC Rally Championship* was just a little too precise with its long and similar stages, while proving just a tad too easy to drive. You bounced off corners rather than ploughing through them to certain destruction.

In this familiar follow-up, Europress have opted to create something far more suited to the arcade, and the game benefits immensely from this approach. Gone are the long drives through wooded Welsh countryside, replaced instead with somewhat clichéd worldwide courses. You know the thing: snowy Scandinavia, green Great Britain, sandy Sahara. Sadly, just like the last game, *International Rally Championship* is seriously lacking in properly designed levels. As the included track designer demonstrates, it's easy to stick together a few curves, bumps and standard scenery, but what really benefits a superb race



game is decent and varied track design. Take *Daytona* at the arcade. Sure, there are only three tracks, but I would rather have three of those than thirty of *Rally Championship*'s.

In the game's defence, however, are the huge number of options available. As well as comprehensive multi-player options, there is the rare two-player split-screen feature.

Graphically impressive, and with general 3D accelerator support, *Rally* doesn't demand a top PC, but looks all the better if you can chuck a few spare processor cycles its way. It looks particularly nice for the night courses, or during snow and rain storms.



Apart from its inevitable Australian clichés, this selection of courses varies little from the others.

"Let down by unimaginative track design."

And while the driving model was always a little too arcadey on the previous game, it suits *International Rally Championship* perfectly. Powerslides are satisfyingly easy to pull off, and the brake pedal is used reassuringly rarely.

The damage element in *Network Q Rally*, which could end your hopes halfway through a rally, has been replaced by a shockingly slight fuel gauge. If you don't over-rev the car, you'll usually get to the end of each track, but refuel stops also appear periodically for a top-up. It works well since, if you play it careful in top gear, you can make up two or three places at each refuelling stop.

It's frustrating that what could have been a superb driving game is let down by unimaginative track design. However, Europress are still the undisputed masters of all things rally-coloured, and the sheer fun factor outweighs the disappointment you might feel gazing at the scenery.

STEVE OWEN



Slick



This is the top half of a split-screen game, hence the letterbox ratio. But just imagine the other bit on the bottom.

Publisher

Developer

Price

Minimum System

Recommended

Graphics Accelerator

Sound Support

Multi-Player

Web Address

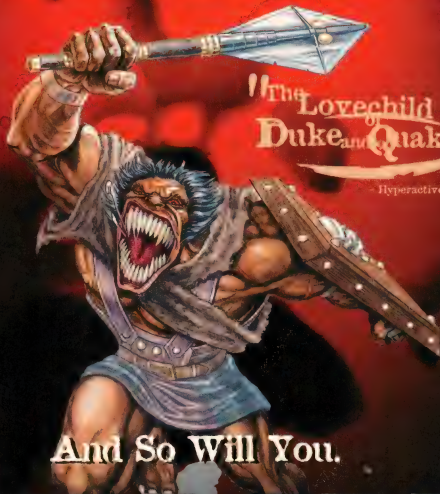
Release Date

PC GAMER

A double-chin's worth of game design, but sadly anorexic in terms of imaginative level design.

83%

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**PC
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ROM**

G-Police



Arresting

That's what we need, a few more bobbies on the beat. In enormous sci-fi helicopters, armed to the teeth of course.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT A PC keyboard that doesn't lend itself to this kind of game. There you sit, hunched, fingers spread like some demonic concert pianist at the start of Rachmaninov's 3rd. Where's weapon select? Damn. I've lost the fire key, turn left, brake, scan - Ow! I think I've dislocated my thumb.

Yes, be warned, *G-Police* is a joystick- or pad-only game and a pretty fine example of the genre so often termed the 'flying shoot 'em-up'. Well, by me, anyway.

The year is 2097, things have inevitably gotten a bit out of hand

world-socio-politico-situation-wise and the, ahem, authorities have decided to form a whole new branch of law-enforcement types. These officers won't be your normal ground based grunts, though; this lot will fly in their own personal armoured gunships, wear tight leather trousers (probably), and model themselves on Harrison Ford's character in *Blade Runner* (definitely). These, ladies and gentlemen, are the G-Police and you are one of them. Phew.

Anyone familiar with EA's *Strike* series of games will recognise the formula here. Your vehicle (the Havoc - thanks, Naming Department) is given total freedom to roam in the game's levels, the advantage this time being that rather than using an isometric viewpoint, *G-Police* presents its



The scanner at the top of the screen allows you to track the position of your mission objectives.

"Presents its environment in the full and proper 3D monty."

environment in the full and proper 3D monty, not unlike *Extreme Assault*. Once you've got accustomed to flying about, dodging the last looming sky scrapers and doing your best not to inadvertently collide with innocent members of the public, you can start to concentrate on the second part of the mix.

Like the *Strike* games before it, *G-Police* has you setting out to complete a set of mission objectives in a set order. Cracking over the



Your on-board computer identifies your targets and highlights them thoughtfully with little white squares.

radio comes your fatherly sergeant to give you your orders – usually to find something and to, variously, kill, arrest or scan it for illegality. When you've done whatever was required, Bilko comes back on the radio and orders you off somewhere else to do something similar. It's like being at work really – only in a multi-million dollar space-age helicopter killing people for a living. Okay, not that much like work then.

The graphics are lush. The software version obviously doesn't shine brightly against the two graphics card options but it's still gong' enough for *Psygnosis* to be offered a hearty round of applause and invited back to your place for tea.

Blade Runner has been an obvious influence on the game and the film's dark seediness seeps into *G-Police* at every

opportunity. Seemingly the only compromise that's been made is the clipping distance – while pop-up is never too obvious or shocking, after a while you do tend to notice that you can't ever really see that far ahead. However, as you spend most of the game diving between narrow streets, chasing the perps, and trying not to hit things by mistake, this hardly matters.

The game's superlative presentation continues with the between-game FMV inserts. The game boasts the longest intro ever seen in the PC GAMER office, and while it may not have been enormously high on ideas, it certainly sets the scene nicely. Similarly,

“A noble extension of the 3D shoot-'em-up style.”

each new level (there are 35 of them in total plus secrets – good value in anyone's book) starts with an FMV briefing containing – hang on – useful gameplay information. Novel.

However, for all *G-Police*'s undoubted graphical and technical prowess, there's something that's just not quite right about it. Playing it reminds us of *Krazy Ivan*, an earlier



Psygnosis game that was similarly advanced for its time, boasted wonderful FMV presentation but somehow just didn't fully connect whenever you played it. For, like *Ivan*, *G-Police*'s controls somehow just don't feel right.

It's not that they're difficult to get to grips with (well, unless you insist on using the keyboard), it's just that they feel unnaturally responsive. It's almost as if there's a basic flaw in the physics which under-calculates the amount of inertia that you feel you should feel. The graphics make you want to believe, the game somehow prevents you.

On the other hand *G-Police* is a noble extension of the 3D shoot-'em-up style. It's got a workable story, a sensible mission structure and a finely pitched difficulty curve spread over a generous party pack of levels. If you've got the hardware to run it at its full specification, there's no finer exhibition of the console-beating standards of the PC. You'll also enjoy playing, watching and participating in a scary futuristic world. Quite whether *G-Police* is the kind of game that anyone's ever going to set up Web sites about, design alternative levels for and ultimately fall in love with, well – we think not.

JAMES ASHTON



Low-level chases through city streets: superb!

Publisher
Developer
Price
Minimum System
Recommended

Graphics Accelerator
Sound Support
Multi-Player
Web Address
Release Date

PC GAMER
Truly gorgeous, and as polished as you could ask for. It just lacks more realistic control. Bah.

82

Please state fully how accident happened.

While travelling at a steady 65 mph, I saw a frog I recognised from school, pull a moonie causing me to swerve at least 3 times in an attempt to kill him.

Only at this stage did I notice the truck that was to remove me from the road and deposit me into the pond and deposit me into the pond.

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage in the 1990s* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 10.

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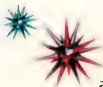
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adrenalin in its purest form.

Panzer General II

Few wargames managed to penetrate the mainstream market in the way that *Panzer General* did. Can the sequel produce a repeat performance?

ICH SPRECHE EIN BISCHEN Deutsch, aber nicht sehr gut." Add to this "Achtung", "Schnell" and "Schweinhund" and you have my full German vocabulary. Not bad for four years of intensive study. While this is sufficient for life in downtown Bath, it would be sadly inadequate were I to assume command of a WWII Panzer division, making the likelihood of this occurrence, even allowing for the possibility of time travel, about 'ein' in 'ein' million. Yet still I fantasise, a fact for which I hold the uniforms largely responsible.

Judging by the sales of *Panzer General I* I'm not alone in my desire to sit atop a King Tiger, directing the flow of battle, blasting any



Who do you think you are kidding Mr Hitler? The battle of Windsor sees you take on the Home Guard.

Belligerent

Shermans in sight. Either that, or you just appreciated and enjoyed a damn fine game. Whatever the reason, it is rare for the release of a wargame to be so eagerly anticipated, and the big question is whether *Panzer General II* can maintain the standard set by its predecessor.

The most obvious change in the second generation engine is the aesthetics of the game. The new look battlefields are a dramatic improvement over the original, as are the 3D units. With six different facings you can now



Royal Marines march to the cry of "Run away".

see and hear the tanks trundle across the battlefield, pointing in the direction that they are moving, instead of disappearing then popping up at their destination, like Mr Benn's shopkeeper. Digital explosions that inflict damage upon the terrain are also a welcome addition. Turn on the hex overlay and you soon realise that these are purely cosmetic changes,

"Its emphasis is on being a fun and easy-to-play wargame."

and *Panzer General II* remains a top-down hex and turn-based wargame.

Beyond the graphics, there appears, on the surface, to have been few changes to the game, which enables you to jump right in and start playing with the same ease that was possible with the original. Look a little deeper, and you find significant improvements. Take a look at the choice of campaigns and the first thing you notice is that you are no longer obliged to play



Requisitioning troops is easier than it looks.

the part of Herr General. Three of the five campaigns give you the opportunity to command the British, American and Russian forces respectively. The remaining two place you in the title role; one from 1938 and the other, which is incredibly difficult, sees you starting in 1942 when things have started to go wrong. The interface has been tidied up a bit, but still feels familiar.

Requisition of new troops is more



straightforward, but identifying core troops during the course of a battle is still confusing. These core units, which gain experience from one scenario to the next, can now acquire their own leaders that progress. These leaders confer certain advantages specific to the leader upon the unit in question. Multi-player support, which enables up to four players to compete across a LAN or the Internet, is



A horde of T34s takes on the mighty Tigers in the largest tank battle of the war.

"The new look battlefields are a dramatic improvement."

provided, but I can't think of anything more frustrating than watching my phone bull clock up while I stare at the screen waiting for my ponderous opponent to take his turn. Fortunately, there is also support for the much more practical PBEM.

There are some areas where the game disappoints. The AI is competent, but it only really seems to employ two strategies: attack or defend. With so many different opposing nations it would have been good if they fought in different ways, but it doesn't feel like they do, making the battles feel a bit anonymous. This feeling is increased from battle to battle, as you're never really sure of the scale of the conflict. There also aren't any variable difficulty

(Main picture) German troops try to establish a foothold on USA soil. (Above) An improved player dossier lets you chart your progress.

settings; you can amend the Prestige level, which affects reinforcements, but that's about it. Scenarios get tougher as the campaign progresses, but the computer being given more troops rather than playing smarter. It would also have been of benefit for the projected odds that appear over any target to have a toggle switch—sometimes it would be nice to assess the odds yourself.

However, to get caught up in these niggling features is to miss the point of *Panzer General II*. While there are many hardcore wargamers who will find the game lightweight, its emphasis is on being a fun and easy-to-play wargame. In this it succeeds, and with over 30 scenarios on top of the campaign game combined with a simple battle editor, it is likely to be played for a long time. JASON WESTON

Publisher
Developer
Price
Minimum System
Recommended

Graphics Accelerator
Sound Support
Multi-Player
Web Address
Release Date

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Armoured Fist 2



David Bowie once sang of "sitting in a tin can". But he wasn't talking about tanks. Oh well.

The idyllic beauty of the rolling clouds and exquisite skyscapes is in brutal contrast to the noisy blasting of an M1-A2 Abrams. No, really.

HUGELY SCEPTICAL OF HOW it's possible to make an interesting tank game (an opinion formed in part through seeing the abortions that have been flushed away before), Novalogic's Voxel 2 tin can game is surprisingly entertaining.

Perhaps if anyone was going to get the balance right this time, it was going to be Novalogic. While we criticised the technically and visually impressive *F22 Lightning 2* and *Comanche 3* for being too simple to play, *Armoured Fist 2* benefits from this approach. Tank warfare just wouldn't be interesting enough if you had to contend with every element found in real life. If you couldn't rely on your computer-controlled gunner to

Hard

successfully line up a target, but had to calculate trajectories and fire-ahead yourself, this game would not only be tedious beyond belief but you wouldn't survive through the first level.

Instead, Novalogic have combined realism - graphically and technically - with a simplistic play-style, creating a simulation that offers you considerably more targets than your average flight simulation. Missions dictate that you wipe out all enemy forces in the area, for instance, and that could be, say, 36 targets, consisting of tanks, armoured personnel carriers, tankers, mobile gun emplacements, towers and buildings, all of which are easily disposed of with three types of shell and a satisfyingly powerful machine-gun.

But this is no shoot-'em-up. Yes, the M1-A2 Abrams on

which this sim is based is the most powerful tank in the world, packing the most powerful ordnance, but you need to take advantage of the terrain to take advantage of your power. As leader of the platoon (and, if you're like me, charging ahead of the pack because you're a bit gung-ho) you are most likely to be targeted as soon as you pop into sight. The idea is to successfully establish where the threat is while remaining concealed yourself, then decide the

best vantage point from which to pick them off. But you must also remain concealed since it takes about three seconds to reload the tube before you can have another go, or wipe out another target.

Similarly, charging through the middle of a battlefield blasting those



The gunner's-eye view allows you to independently target enemy units that the radar can't lock onto.





Hiding under the netting is your long-range artillery, which can be called in to help if it all gets too much.

around you Rambo style ain't going to work. Sit still, target carefully and a successful hit is virtually guaranteed. But getting your gunner to compensate for a tank bouncing over rough terrain is probably pushing it.

Novalogic's mission design keeps you interested, introducing surprises of an almost *Doom*-like style. Intelligence reports have located a group of tanks that must be wiped out, but as you negotiate valleys to reach the area, popping over small hills for a quick look, you can almost literally dump in your pants when two T-80 tanks appear next to you. This is the ideal time to hit the brakes and reverse like hell, hoping they either follow you to their doom, or stay there and get bombed by the air support you are just about to call in. But you do have to react very quickly, because while you may be able to handle getting peppered by machine-gun fire, an armour-piercing explosive shell fired at point-blank range is likely to cause a degree of chafing.



From the relative safety of the belly of your metal beast, you spy a soon-to-be-dead buddy. Blam, etc.



Now that's just cheating. What's wrong with driving there? And look out for the tank, will ya?

"Blasting Rambo style ain't going to work."

Graphically you have been spoiled, provided you can generously offer mucho processor cycles in return. The once blocky Voxel 2 engine seems considerably more comfortable moving below you at 40 miles per hour rather than 200. The terrain is suitably bumpy, with plenty of surface variety – sand, grass, snow, rocks. And while the occasional splattering of buildings to signify a village isn't totally convincing, there are plenty of visual clues to help you familiarise yourself with your surroundings.

Various views aid targeting and navigation; from third-person chase-cams zooming out to satellite views, to genuine in-tank viewpoints, either representing bloke with head out the top, man with bumpy lens used for independent targeting and even the driver

A deathmatch alternative?

Don't go deleting *Quake* just yet. While *Armored Fist 2*'s deathmatch options are varied and interesting, and sneaking around some hills to get off the first shot has plenty of appeal, there just isn't quite enough going on to keep you interested for long. Frequently it degenerates into a frantic thumping of the fire button to release a shot the moment you have reloaded, before your opponent is able to do the same.

And like the moment when you've got a rocket launcher and a vantage point in *Quake*, occupying the high ground in deathmatch *Armored Fist 2* should see you dispatching everyone the moment you catch sight of them.

desperately trying to find his way with just a strip of reinforced glass to protect his eyesight.

Generously, 44 missions demand your attention, including a few training sessions, some basic one-off sorties and four campaign scenarios, based in the Congo (leafy), Eastern Russia (cold and heartless), Belarus (a bit warmer) and Iran (dusty). Suitably increasing in difficulty, later missions can be hellish, and while you can jump into other tanks in your platoon should you be destroyed, it is genuinely depressing to see your comrades blown to bits. Perhaps the long-term interest of the game would have benefited from a mission builder.

It's not the most gob-smackingly impressive simulation you'll play – it's no *F22 ADF* on the ground – but it does successfully combine heart-stopping action with a real feeling of being there. A job well done, if you like. STEVE OWEN

Publisher

Developer

Price

Minimum System

Recommended

Graphics Accelerator

Sound Support

Multi-Player

Web Address

Release Date

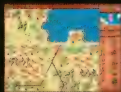
PC GAMER

Loud bangs, plenty of panic, lots to do, and surprisingly enjoyable. We like.

84

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Matchday 3

The classic *Matchday* formula gets a Nineties lick of paint... but has it been worth the wait?

IT'S A COLD-HEARTED GAMES player who doesn't harbour fond memories of playing *Matchday*. Coded by industry legend Jon Ritman, it was groundbreaking stuff in the days when attribute clashes and RAM-packs were all the rage. A decade later the very same gent has attempted to work his football magic for the PC.

What a shame, then, that first impressions suggest he's slept through the intervening years. The international teams run out onto the pitch like miniature Gerry Anderson puppets, all stiff animation and ill-proportioned heads. No matter which of the half-dozen camera angles you choose to view the action, the figures all appear too far away and strangely fragile. You couldn't get further from the slick



Passed-it

polygon action of *Actua Soccer* with the use of a particularly powerful space shuttle.

With a kind of charming simplicity the pre-game selections are limited and consist of big bright buttons. There's every single multi-player option you could ever need, and as well as Friendly matches you can play in a Cup or

League. If taking on the whole world is daunting, a Micro option enables you to choose a handful of opponents and play off against them.

Once the game's kicked off, atmosphere inside the grounds can be a tad sparse; there's no commentary, and the crowd sounds are an unsophisticated background roar.

However, first impressions aren't always right. If the cosmetics seem dated, they hide quite a smart game engine. That isn't to say it's not flawed, just that in many ways the Cranberry Source team have been innovative.

The control system, for instance, is puzzling at first with its rejection of the standard arcade approach to ball control. Instead of a short pass/long pass set-up, each of the kick buttons indicates a height, from a ground push to a high chip. Holding the button down dictates the power behind the boot. Ideally this means a skilled player keeps tight control over all passing and shooting.

In reality, though, gaining the digital dexterity required to master the total range of

The ball sits equi-distant from half-a-dozen players, who stare back, paralysed by the moment. What happened next?

"Stiff animation and ill-proportioned heads."

kicks takes perseverance, and putting together a decent series of passes is frustratingly difficult – not a good sign for a game which in other respects purports to be uncomplicated.

Conversely, the controls when you're not in possession are straightforward. Running, sprinting (your sprint power is indicated by the brightness of the selection halo) and tackling are so intuitive that a *Matchday* event would be a low scoring competition if it weren't for the automatic goalies' unnatural desire to come off their line at every opportunity.

With so many old Spectrum owners cheering on the *Matchday* brand it would be lovely to welcome Ritman's third soccer outing as a modern classic. With practice, the merits of the novel control method make playing against a friend a satisfying challenge, but visually *Matchday* is not Premier League material.

NATHAN JONES



Matchday 3 should spell the end for the ill-fated polar sprouts experiment. Nobody likes sprouts.

Publisher	
Developer	
Price	
Minimum System	
Recommendation	

Graphics Accelerator	
Sound Support	
Multi-Player	
Web Address	
Release Date	

GAMER
Visually dated and subtly flawed,
but invest some effort and it can
be rewardingly playable.

72

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Riven

Time warp back to an age where games simply weren't as good as they are now...

THREE YEARS? THREE YEARS? What the hell have they been playing at, the brothers Miller, to have spent all that time apparently working on the sequel to *Myst*, only to have turned in, finally, what seems to be exactly the same game again?

Have they been playing *Myst*? I doubt it – and I speak with some authority, too, as someone who's actually completed the game twice: once for review and, 'cos I liked it, once to write a complete solution. Second time round, it seemed significantly less magical, and rather more – how can I put it? – tedious. After three years, even its creators must've got bored of it.

So have they been playing *Riven*? What'd be the point? It's *Myst* again, but... er... but...

But nothing. The extent to which *Riven*



Anyone remember Smith's law? That the quality of gameplay is inversely proportional to the total surface area of rendered marble in any game?



Missed

“Exhibits a wilful neglect of the most elementary gameplay fundamentals.”

slavishly copies its predecessor has to be seen to be believed. Three years – a time in which the capabilities afforded by CD ROM have turned from unexploited curiosities to integral elements of almost every piece of software – have passed unnoticed by the developers.

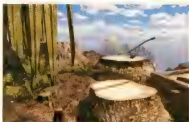
This is utterly inexcusable. It's almost insulting.

An artist has to understand their medium. The Millers can't go around describing *Riven* as a piece of “story-telling interactive media”, or whatever, without stopping to wonder:

“Hey, why exactly are we bothering to make this a computer game? Why not just draw some nice atmospheric pictures, and play some nice

atmospheric sounds as people walk around a gallery looking at them? If they like, we can make it so they have to press buttons to get through the doors between each room.”

As it is, *Riven* exhibits a wilful neglect of the most elementary gameplay fundamentals. In fact, the brothers' attitude is almost admirable in its childish stamp-footedness: “No, we *shan't* let you look around. We *shan't* have animated screen-to-screen transitions, relying instead on the old *Myst* dissolve. We *shan't* bother to hire



See the dome in the distance? Important, that.

proper actors for the ludicrously over-long, absurdly acted and preposterously nonsensical ‘character’ video sequences – we can do them perfectly well ourselves, thank you.”

Myst was one of the most original and influential computer games of the past five years. It worked within the limits of the technology then available to create a genuinely engaging adventure in a strange new world. But all the problems we forgave the precursor in its visionary blaze of multimedia glory are exhibited once more in *Riven*. This time, with *Myst*'s tricks having been learned, and improved upon, by numerous other developer-type folk, we just can't overlook the lack of real 3D space, the inconsistent navigation system, the leaden pace, the over-complicated puzzles and the clunkiness of every attempted ‘interaction’.

Sure, the graphical renders are undeniably gorgeous: their thousand-colourness is the only real development over the original game. But, really, that's just not good enough. I hate to have to say it, but the sequel to *Myst* is a big fat stupid lumbering overblown disappointment.

With some very pretty pictures. JON SMITH

Publisher
Developer
Price
Minimum System
Recommended

Graphics Accelerator
Sound Support
Multi-Player
Web Address
Release Date

PC GAMER
It's like the most exciting three years in game development history never happened.

50.



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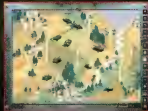
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II



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Sub Culture

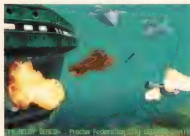
Criterion's submarine game merely dabbles where it might have dived. But it probably shouldn't bomb.

A DEVASTATING AND NEAR invisible weapon, a submarine is also more vulnerable than a kitten left drifting in a boating lake on a plank of wood. The sound of dripping water at ten thousand leagues beneath the sea surely has no equal for terror, while effective fighting demands a unique combination of stealth, precise, explosive firepower and the screaming of unintelligible phrases in a husky Russian accent.

Sadly, most sub sims prove about as exciting as Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 98* without the ground. And no-one's even attempted to recreate the claustrophobia of sublife. *Sub Culture* doesn't even try. In place of the gritty realism of *Das Boot* or the tension of *The Hunt For Red October*, we've a strange tale of antagonistic Wallace and Gromit-style midgeets. Just 1cm high, and in constant danger from falling tin cans, they seem out of place in their watery environs. There are no currents in the water, despite it being a section of the notoriously frisky ocean, no breached hulls, and not a hint of true sonar. Essentially, *Sub Culture* is a space opera with fish.

The trouble is, unlike space, the world of *Sub Culture* is a tiny one. Trading your way to earn money for upgrades and repairs, and heading off on the occasional war mission, you soon realise the landscape is about the size of a lime-green plastic island home for terrapins. This makes both the stock markets and the war between cities within spitting distance of each other seem a little ludicrous.

You never really feel lost in the depths,



Your sub looks more like it should be floating in a bathtub than fighting brutally beneath the waves.



Shallow

when, if the graphics engine is up to it, you could always turn around and see home. Moving seamlessly to graphics then, quite frankly, Criterion's Renderware 3D engine has seen better days. Even with a PowerVR card,

"Essentially, a space opera with fish."

the drawing is terribly intrusive. At first, it's hard to take your eyes off the pixel-slick spreading, like oil across the screen. And while the lighting effects are dazzling, moving destroys the moment. What *Sub Culture* needs is a little old-fashioned misting, wrapped up in a gloom-of-the-deep dressing. Other craft, fish and the human junk are more successfully implemented, the little thrusters on your sub visibly swivelling as you rise or sink.

Yet trading, retrofitting your submarine and tackling the diverse range of fairly linear missions is actually fairly good fun. If the early missions are easy, at least they get you intimate with the game's plot straight away. Most of the weird attachments you can buy for your sub, such as the magnet or the fisherman's attractatron, are used in the missions, as well as



The lighting effects are undoubtedly impressive, especially if you have a 3D accelerator.

for salvaging scrap like the bottle-tops and tin cans littering the ocean. Setting off flares in a tunnel or towing a downed barge home by magnet as it pulls you about with its wild gyrations gives a hint of the atmosphere that could have been much more thoroughly exploited. Although you never feel immersed in the ocean, you do get drawn into the game.

Sub Culture's biggest problem is that Blue Byte's *Archimedean Dynasty* did nearly all this (without the trading or so many neat gadgets) nearly a year ago.

NATHAN JONES

Publisher
Developer
Price
Minimum System
Recommended



Graphics Accelerator
Sound Support
Multi-Player
Web Address
Release Date



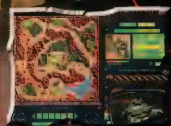
PC GAMER

Despite an unconvincing sub-aquatic environment, *Sub Culture* is strangely engaging.

70

UPRISING

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Ubi Soft

Prelude To Waterloo



Empire £40

A wargaming era comes to an end, but does the Battleground series go out with a bang or a whimper?

THE ENGINE IN MY BEATEN-UP Citroën is still going; just. The Battleground engine has, however, reached the end of its lifespan. This has earned me a tidy sum of money, but still leaves a tinge of sadness. A fabulous collection of eight wargames comes to its conclusion with *Prelude To Waterloo*. Intent on sending the series off with a bang, Talonsoft have focused their attention on the days preceding Waterloo at Quatre-Bras and Ligny.

All the features we've come to expect from the series are present, from the beautiful hand-drawn maps to the well-ordered phase sequence and challenging



Sluggish map scrolling and a primitive interface blight proceedings in this, the Battleground series' last stand.

AI. Also still present is the slow map scrolling and an interface, once considered slick, which has since been superseded. These factors tell you that the right decision has been made in retiring a well-worn engine that has seen better days. Despite this there are some new inclusions that make *Prelude To Waterloo* worth a second look. For the first time in the series there is a set of linked scenarios. Perhaps more impressive, especially if you own *Battleground Waterloo*, is the ability to link the two games. This means that you can

"The right decision has been made in retiring this well-worn engine."

play a twin map scenario that covers both Ligny and the crossroads at Quatre-Bras, then save it as a campaign. You can then open this file in *Battleground Waterloo* and your success or failure will be reflected by the troops and starting position in the main battle.

They say you can't have too much of a good thing. They are wrong. Familiarity breeds contempt, which is a shame, because taken on its own merits *Prelude To Waterloo* is a fine game. JASON WESTON

PC GAMER
Nothing more and nothing less than we have come to expect from the Battleground series.

68

Agent Armstrong

Virgin £30

Loading up *Agent Armstrong* on PC GAMER's uber PC, loaded with RAM and assorted turbo-charging graphics cards, it was disconcerting to see the game prefers to play in a screen roughly the size of a postcard. Pump up the dimensions, though, and you can see why. "Ah, hello Mr Pixel, to be honest, we weren't expecting you."

And the disappointment doesn't stop there! *Agent Armstrong's* mission is to travel from the left hand side of the screen to the right, shooting baddies, blowing things up and assuming only one of eight different positions. Yep, it's sprite-based platform adventure time again so don't even think about moving at any angle other than one of the eight divisible by 45 degrees. *Tomb Raider* this most certainly isn't.

Okay, there are some nice touches. If our eponymous hero falls in any of the levels' watery bits, his gun won't work properly for a couple of seconds, restricting itself to a few impatient glugging noises. However, flashing sprites to indicate hits, explosion effects



that would embarrass the 8-bit consoles and a shocking lack of innovation when it comes to level design, are all just the entrée to *Agent Armstrong's* four-course feast of disappointments. Apart from the fact that you can walk a few paces into or out of the screen, as far as gameplay goes this really could be *Commando* or anything of its home computer ilk from 15 years ago. The *Cruader* games weren't exactly cutting edge when they came out, but there was still a whole lot more to them than this.

If *Agent Armstrong* arrived on your lap via some strangely benevolent act of matter transference, you could play its 30 missions and probably stave off a little more of life's encroaching ennui. Prise £30 out of your wallet for it, though? You'd be sorely disappointed.

JAMES ASHTON

60

Perfect Assassin



Grolier £35

Conjure up as many images of hit-men as you can, and then prepare to see none of them in this game.

IT IS SUCH A SHAME WHEN A GAME'S name promises much more than it can ever deliver. *Perfect Assassin*? Stodgy Slow Blue Bloke more like. A perfect assassin is a lithe, enviable, well-armed, sassy, cold-hearted killer – Nikita, if you will – not an enormous lumbering oaf who'd be more at home with a bun fight than a gun-fight. Okay, so he was drawn by "leading UK fantasy artist" Key Walker whose 2D cartoon – sorry, comic book – credits include Judge Dredd (both in 2000AD and for Stallone's floptastic movie), but while he looks broadly impressive on the page, he looks a real lardbox in 3D.

"Satisfies neither shoot-'em-up fans nor adventure nuts."

Besides having a doughnut for a hero, (im) *Perfect Assassin* is flawed in other ways. The control system is clumsy; making conversations and moving about the 3D landscape is irritating. The swirling viewpoints are disorientating, it's not clear where you have to click to make your character move and he often has to take two steps back where

The 'Perfect Assassin' dispatches another imperfectly formed foe, with some helpful red lines to show where you're aiming. He really should get a doctor to look at that growth in his ear.

he came from to make three in the right direction. At the most basic level, it's simply an unpleasant game to play.

But what's worse is the deeply disappointing nature of the game's puzzle-solving elements. One of the first tasks is to get in the Mojo Ladder club, for which you need a rare and jealously guarded membership card. A couple of cursory conversations and it's revealed you have to get one from a bloke called Fle'Pah, who just happens to be standing on the roof of a building. Talk to him and he says he'll give you his (for no good reason), but you'll need a key to get in – somehow he's been locked inside his own house. Kill a bloke who happens to be wandering past, search the body and lo! There's the key. Open the door and Fle'Pah has disappeared leaving his membership card for you on the table.

And, no, you can't go up the stairs to look for him 'cos that's not allowed. Why? Because the whole thing is, essentially, pants. It's ill conceived and badly executed, satisfying neither shoot-'em-up fans nor adventure nuts with an instantly forgettable blend of action and puzzles. The only lasting impression it'll leave will be the one in your wallet where your money used to be.

RICHARD LONGHURST

PC GAMER
A dismal halfway violent adventure that is neither here nor there nor anywhere in between.

35

You Don't Know Jack

BMG £35

There's a pub just across the road from the office. A pub that takes 30 seconds to run to from the PC GAMER office, or considerably less if you jump from the first floor window.

And in that pub, at the far end of the bar, is a quiz machine regularly surrounded by a gaggle of steaming journo's, all clawing pathetically at the touch-sensitive screen in the vain hope of winning ten pounds.

You Don't Know Jack offers a similar brand of quizzy fun, though obviously without the potential cash benefits, or the pub location.

If, however, you've got a few mates round at your house, a slab of Stellas in the fridge, and some dosh with which to bet, you can faithfully recreate these conditions, and engender the same amount of fun to the proceedings.

For *Jack* may be a quiz game, but, unlike the adaptations of popular board games such as Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit and chess, it's one which has been



specifically designed to be more fun to play on your PC than a piece of folding cardboard.

Each player is assigned a key with which to buzz in and answer the 'general knowledge' questions which are a mix of the obscure, funny, and often slightly obscene.

Presentation-wise, *Jack* is polished to a Mr Sheen finish, if a slightly-Americanised one. Each question is read out in a suitably draft voice (which can get slightly grating), but it's all done so professionally that you immediately get caught up in the atmosphere of it all.

As a single-player game, of course, it's as interesting as going through a box of Triv cards on your own. Limit your games to social gatherings, though, and it can be more satisfying than all-naked Twister.

MATTHEW PIERCE **75**

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"WILL HAVE A SIMILAR IMPACT TO
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THE OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
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Links LS Champ Courses

Eidos £20 each

No more waxing lyrical about the beauty of *Links LS* how it is the slickest game ever written; how we liked it one position more than *Tomb Raider* in our Top 100 even. I'm through with singing its praises. Not because the game doesn't deserve it, but because



I'm going to have to shut up sooner or later. So it might as well be now. Right.

Eidos have released three new courses for *Links LS*. *LS 1998*, *Links 386* and *Microsoft Golf*. Supporting whatever resolution you want to play them at, they also feature course fly-bys, recorded players and pointless 3D virtual tours of the clubhouses.

Davis Love III at Sea Island - *The Cloister* has the longest name, and is possibly the most attractive, set, quite literally, on an island surrounded, as islands often are, by water. You could almost be on holiday as you hopelessly punch golf balls off the splattering of palm trees that sprout proudly from the rough. It is, simultaneously, the easiest of the three courses. I managed eight under on my first trip out.

Oakland Hills Country Club is the toughest of the set, consisting of 18 ultra-thin dog legs generally surrounded by water or other hazards, and quite often an area subject to such high winds that Michael Fish would tell the residents there was nothing to worry about. It is one hell of a challenge, though, and thanks to its tree-lined beauty, has become one of my favourite courses.

The enigmatically named *Valhalla Golf Club* plays second fiddle to *Oakland Hills*, featuring many similar long drives down narrow tree-lined fairways, but isn't quite so generous with its hazards. A handy average of the other two then.

Only you know if you need new courses, but *Oakland Hills* does come recommended.

STEVE OWEN

67

Project Paradise

Alternative £30

With the popularity of 3D first-person games apparent, it's a wonder why software developers are now jumping to make games for the 'top-down' genre instead.

Why they assume gamers want to play from a scallag's-eye view is anyone's guess, but I suppose a pretty good theory is that it's far easier to code.

Even bearing this in mind, though, when you look at *Project Paradise*'s complete lack of substance, originality or addictiveness, you can't help thinking that the programmers didn't know quite what they were doing at any stage of the project.

Basically, what we're looking at here is *Machine Hunter* without the pretty graphics, or *Take No Prisoners* without the thought. It's a standard parallax-scrolling 360° affair, with pick-ups to boost your weaponry, and a choice of characters to revive your flagging interest.

It doesn't work, though.



After running, strafing, and searching through just one level, you're dying for a game of *anything* else - simply to take your mind off the desperate tedium of this sub-standard shooter.

Graphically we're firmly in earthworn country. Muddy browns, greys and greens set the ugly scene, while the sprite characters run around, clutching their oversized weapons, and generally looking ill defined.

As far as the engine goes, things move around smoothly enough, but even on a P200 with 32Mb RAM, the SVGA mode was virtually unplayable, and, anyway, no amount of graphical beauty could disguise what is essentially a monstrously dull 'search-for-the-keys-and-kill-the-alien' game.

There's nothing here that held my interest for more than 20 minutes, and there's even less that makes me advise you to part with 30 of your hard earned for it.

Leave it on the shelf, pick up a different game, and hopefully it will soon be Paradise lost.

MATTHEW PIERCE

41

Combat Chess

Empire £40

Why is it that arguably the most popular board-game in the world is generally practised by social misfits like bowl-headed Russian schoolchildren, and bloated, dome-headed intellectuals wearing leather-elbowed tweed jackets? Whereas computer games, as we all know, are played by good-looking, dynamic socialites who have to fight off potential sexual partners with a particularly long stick.

Who knows? But what I do know is that *Empire* have attempted to make the ancient board-game into a rock 'n' roll gorefest by adding pretty graphics, bloody animations, and a drum 'n' bass soundtrack. Okay, maybe the soundtrack's a little more subtle than that, but, as anyone who's ever played *Star Wars Chess* will know, if you're after a serious game of chess, the oversized and unrecognisable pieces do little to help concentration.

To *Empire*'s credit, *Combat Chess* does offer a very good game - then again it should do, seeing as it's been designed by the current champion chess programmer. However, what they've really set out to do - that is, produce a more visually exciting and atmospheric game - is something of a mixed-bag. The animations (which even go on between moves) tend to distract you from the game in progress, and often you'll have to wait a few seconds until they finish before you can finally make your move. While even the suitably moody music becomes off-putting.

Bearing in mind that we preferred playing with the standard Staunton pieces rather than the war set, it's evident that *Combat Chess* fails to accomplish what it sets out to do. Obviously



the animations jazz up long games, but if it's serious chess you're after, the superb *Chessmaster 4000*'s still your best bet.

MATTHEW PIERCE

70

Forbes Corporate Warrior

Byron Press Multimedia £30

When a game has the tag-line "Business is War!", you sincerely hope they're being ironic. But,



sadly, corporate war is as straight-faced and as straight-laced as they come.

Essentially it's *Wall Street* meets that dodgy virtual reality bit at the end of *Disclosure* - a third-rate 3D shoot 'em-up with fourth-rate graphics in which you have to steal customers from other companies by zapping opponents with your Price Slicer or hitting 'em with your Marketing Death Ray of Many Colours (known in the trade as the Ad Blaster). A level's only over when your share price has gone through the roof and then it's onwards and upwards to a more competitive market.

And if you think the basic premise leaves a little to be desired, the execution will have you reeling with horror. Each level is a flat, open plane of nothingness, with badly constructed 3D objects sliding into view. The idea is that your choice of weapon depends on the type of goods demanded by customers in your opponent's market - if they want thrifty goods and your opponent's supplying luxury goods, you can win them over by zapping your foe with the Price Blaster. Win enough market share and your share price will slowly rise, only to be forced down by random events that are out of your control. Ysk.

Bad graphics, bad design and bad karma aside, it would be funny if it didn't take itself so seriously. "Based on 15 years of empirical data from an internationally recognised business simulation firm," boasts the box, which makes much of the game's connection with top US business magazine publisher *Forbes*. Let's hope they invested so much on their first foray into the games market that there won't be any cash left for another attempt.

RICHARD LONGHURST

8

X:TREME POWER II PACK

**3 INCREDIBLE GAMES
1 AWESOME JOYPAD**

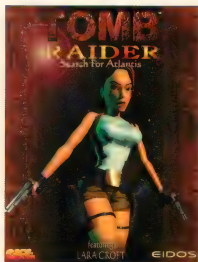
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**91% - PC HOME
86% - PC ZONE**



**95% - PC POWER
92% - PC ZONE CLASSIC
8/10 EDGE**



**95% - PC ZONE CLASSIC
10/10 PC REVIEW
93% - PC GAMER**



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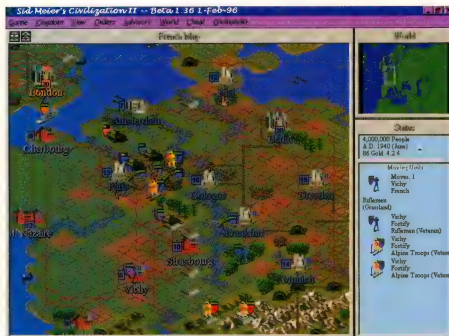


x:treme
x:treme entertainment



They're back!

"Like a... rubber ball I'll come bouncing back to you." So sang this month's games to us, as if to explain their reappearance. By STEVE OWEN



CIVILIZATION II

MicroProse £20

The game that needs no introduction has, ironically, just been given one. Because, as we were at great pains to point out (and, it later proved, were to suffer some personal attacks as a result), *Civilization II* is certainly the finest game ever made. Even some 30 months after it first appeared. No flash graphics, no fancy sound and no 3D accelerator card nonsense is required to create the most sublime and time-consuming pastime on this planet. You spend nearly a third of your life asleep, but if you could get away without it, you would doubtless spend nearly half



of your life playing *Civilization II*. And you would still love it.

In fact, it is easy enough to say that the *only* thing that is wrong with *Civ II* is that each game takes so long to play that you just can't fill in those odd ten minutes you find between jobs. Well, of course you can, only it wouldn't just be ten minutes any more. It would be the rest of the day. Because *Civ II* is the most addictive substance known to man.

Yes, more addictive than heroine, cocaine and Telly Tubbies, because heroine and cocaine kill you and Telly Tubbies sends you insane.

Oh, the depth, breadth, width and height of the game are, frankly, inconceivable. This is the Strategy God, the Zeus with all his little pretenders around his feet, gazing up adoringly. Turn-based it may be, but it means that you can plan every move in inestimably satisfying detail. And unlike its modern-day real-time children, you don't actually have to be a warmonger (although it is somewhat inevitable). No, you can peacefully run the planet, and placidly colonise Alpha Centauri. And there are an infinite number of ways of achieving that goal.

If re-releasing this for £20 seems a little tight-fisted (since most new games get reduced to 25 quid immediately these days), bear in mind that it is still better than anything else out there. And be grateful.

QUAKE

GT/Replay £15



What the hell is going on here? How can the two best games of all time possibly be released on budget during the same month? I've spent about two years desperately finding something interesting to buy in each month's wheele-bin of budget dross, and now I'm limited to a single page in an attempt to get you to buy the greatest games of all time – for not much money! Of course, you've probably already got them both anyway. And good on you. But let's just assume, for the sake of argument, that you aren't entirely sure what this *Quake* thing is. And having made that assumption let's now suppose that you've had A BLEEDIN' LOBOTOMY! Of course you know about *Quake*. It's only the biggest on-line gaming sensation in the world.

In fact, inspired by our very own 'Happy Birthday Quake' feature a couple of issues ago, we've all started playing it again. Even BT's Wireplay have finally geared themselves up to support deathmatches, which should make the multi-player madness that we lucky network users have been enjoying since its release possible for you lot too.

But, be warned, if you've been reared on *Doom*, then *Quake* is not the most satisfying of single-player experiences. In fact, it can be a little straightforward. Buy a modem, buy *Quake* on Replay (to replace that illegal copy, hmm...) and blast some other poor sucker somewhere else in the country.



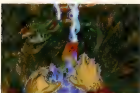
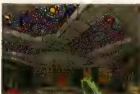
94%

HEXEN

GT/Replay £13

A timely release to cash in on popularity, or industrial sabotage? The appearance of *Hexen II* at £45 could be that little shove necessary to persuade thousands to buy *Hexen* as well to get more of the same (don't forget that Activision won the rights to publish the sequel). Or it could, perhaps, be a way of destroying sales of *Hexen II* by releasing something remarkably similar but for a third of the price.

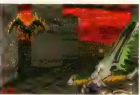
Or, more likely, it is just a gift to you lucky, lucky readers. Because you should own, play and adore both games, since they are adorable, playable and ownable... worth owning.



Sure, it does look a little dated these days. Utilising an improved *Doom* engine, there's the blocky sprites problem and what now seems to be a shockingly low resolution, but what cannot be ignored is the strength of the game and its ideas.

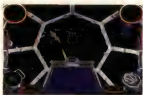
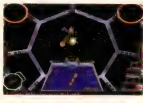
It has the birth of the hub system, where levels branch out from a central area that is revisited time and again (which doesn't always work, but is a nice idea), takes the inventory system and power-ups further than we got in the prequel *Heretic*, and also has a few characters to choose from. Perhaps a little heavy handed and clichéd, you choose between the hard asse Warrior, weedy magical Mage or the conveniently in-between Cleric.

It's huge, it's well designed, and it's a lot cheaper than its better-looking sequel.



X-WING COLLECTOR'S CD AND REBEL ASSAULT

White Label £15



The opening number of White Label's new doubles pack, this offers the opportunity to soak up a bit more Star Wars atmos just as the Special Editions are released on video.

It's an interesting combination to release in one go, too. Not only are they not the best examples of what has been done with the licence, but they are about as far apart as you can get. What I mean is that *X-Wing Collector's CD* is one of the finest thought-out and playable games that has ever been seen on a PC, but looks a little ugly these days; while *Rebel Assault* is packed full of extremely impressive visual tricks and the complete stirring sound-track, but lacks any form of entertainment value, short of once upon a time being a good way to show off to your mates the power of the compact disc.

But each has been surpassed by its various sequels. *TIE Fighter Collector's CD* is still just about the finest 3D combat game you can buy (for the single player at least, although special single-player combat scenarios are soon to be released for *XW vs TF*), with drastically improved graphics and tougher and more imaginative missions. And while *Rebel Assault* 2 somehow managed to be even more dull than its forefather, last month's *Shadows Of The Empire* is much the same thing done much better.



FINAL DOOM

GT/Replay £10

Quake may be the most important game of modern times, but the ancients were more impressed by something called *Doom*. In fact, if you just try to forget about *Terris* for a second, and maybe *Space Invaders*, there's every chance that, off the top of my head at least, *Doom* is the best known game of all time. Certainly it's the best known and most played PC game of all time. Or maybe *Windows Solitaire*, or *Minchunt*.

This intro is going horribly wrong...

Now, don't get confused with *Ultimate Doom*, which is the original three episodes of registered *Doom*, plus an extra chapter written by Id. And don't get confused with *Doom II*, either, the cash-in beauty that took the whole idea of the original, made it a lot harder, and sold it for 50 quid.

Final Doom is none of those things. It's a swan-song, but in the same way that *The Godfather Part III* is a swan-song to the original two classic, wonderful films, taking many of the ideas, but asking Francis Ford Coppola's daughter to be in a lead role, thus not making it in the same league. You see, the levels in *Final Doom* aren't by Id, but are specially commissioned from the most talented level designers found on the Internet. As such there is little coherency between the 32 WADs, and each designer has the propensity

to stick loads of monsters in a room and little ammo to make it harder. Still good (especially at this price), but just not good enough anymore.

64



AND THE REST...

Good looking but somewhat limited flight sim fun is yours for the princely sum of £13 from EA Classics. Called, longwindedly, *F22 Lightning 2 (82%)*, it heralds the arrival of a sequel in the next month or two from designers Novalogic. Its lack of campaigns blighted the appeal at £40, but it represents much better value for money today.

Under A Killing Moon



(23%) has just come out for £6 on the Kixx label. We didn't like it much 21 issues ago when it was a tennor, and we like it less now.

Apogee's *Death Rally (60%)* from Replay didn't take long to come out on budget, but then it was only 20 quid when it first appeared. The *Duke Nukem* guys should have done a better job, but their plans just became a lacklustre *Death Race 2000* clone, a top-down *Carmageddon* if you like.

Budding parents can try their hand with some *Creatures*



(74%), also on GT's Replay label, but originally released by now defunct Warner. Little Computer People are dragged into this decade by employing some frighteningly complex artificial intelligence, including simulating DNA and brain-wave patterns. Each little creature is taught to feed, play, explore, look after itself, breed successfully and even learn to talk. With a successful lifetime of around two weeks, it's certainly a little more complex and involving than those damned little toys from Japan.

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At last the software industry is spreading its wings and casting aside the first-person genre as the only platform suitable for Internet-based multi-play action. With *Hexen II* and *Age Of Empires* our choice is beginning to broaden. **By JAKE BRADLEY**

Hexen II sites

Try these Web sites for all the information, software and contacts you need to get the most out of your copy of *Hexen II*.

HEXENWORLD

www.hexenworld.com

The central info service for all resources relating to the on-line *Hexen II* players. Including news of updates, clan movements and tournaments.



GAMESPY



www.gamespy.com
An updated version of QuakeSpy that has support for Quake, *Hexen II* and soon all the myriad of approaching Quake engine titles will be included. Not forgetting the monstrous *Quake II*.

QTRACKER

www.mindspring.com/~mfainn/qtracker/
It's always nice to have an alternative to the norm. This 'other' Quake server utility also has *Hexen II* support and some nice additions not available in QuakeSpy.



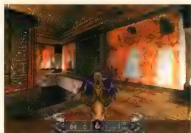
QUAKE HAS DOMINATED THE on-line game servers in the US and Europe for over a year now and not just the game, but the engine too. John Carmack was one of the first programmers to have the insight to include Internet functionality as an integral part of Quake's engine. Since its release, some five other developers have licensed the technology – because it's so modular they can simply design their own levels, characters, textures sounds and environments and plug them into the engine.

The result is the arrival of said games on similar or often the same multi-play servers, *Hexen II* being the first. So not only is the game engine modular enough to allow other developers to twist and mould it into their



own vision of a great game design, but the on-line gaming community is already familiar with the set-up and commands needed to jump in and play.

As a result, the guys at QuakeSpy (the incredible Quake server search and hook up utility) have revisited their own software.



HexenWorld has arrived and with it a whole new line in multi-player games. Shame it's boring multi-player then...



Microsoft's original game has recently been upgraded to the excellent sequel.



QuakeSpy has undergone a fairly hefty facelift. Now known as GameSpy, it will perform the same basic functions as the original but with additional support for the plethora of upcoming *Quake* engine titles. Bar *Daikatana*, of course, because John Romero doesn't see the point in Internet-based gaming – it's LAN or nothing for the self-proclaimed King of game design.

GameSpy takes another step forward to plug and play Internet gaming, which is the only way to go. There's simply nothing worse than typing in endless Internet Protocol addresses and port numbers, so it takes care of all that nonsense for you.

So on to *Hexen II* and its spawning onto the Net. The first thing I noticed was a huge number of familiar names from the *Quake* community appearing in the arenas. A totally new game in many respects but the similarities are strong enough to draw the ever faithful *QuakeWorld* players into the fray.

In my book, you can't beat the old rocket launcher for hardcore deathmatch, but *Hexen II* will definitely appeal to those players who prefer a more cunning and subtle approach.

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Age Of Empires

After our 'Microsoft in very good game' scandal last issue, I decided to take a peak at *Age Of Empires* on-line after discovering its arrival on the Internet gaming zone. The one-player game is a very satisfying and involving experience but on-line it really opens up into an epic strategy game. Real thought has gone into the multi-player side; it doesn't carry an Internet plug-in for the sake of it, oh no.

There are a number of set-up parameters to change and adapt, so you have more choice to play the game you want to play. You can set the winning criteria, whether it's world domination using your Naval forces and armies or concentrate on the domination of the world economy – it's up to you. This is another example of the try-before-you-buy publishing method started in earnest by Id Software four years ago. Kind of like an on-line listening booth.

Age Of Empires, which we awarded a splendid 92% last issue, is available on the Web now.

MULTI-TRIBE PLAY

high either, considering the server is over the pond.

Check out these sites for a trial version of the wonderfully deep and involving *Age Of Empires*: www.microsoft.com, www.ensemble.net and, of course, www.zone.com to play on-line, even with the demo.

Document: Done

The use of magic makes for some entertaining comedy moments, especially when you convert three duelling rivals into a small flock of sheep and then decimate them with a tome of power crossbow attack.

Already we're starting to see the formation of *Hexen II* clans and a clan ring organising tournaments and the like. In fact it's almost a direct parallel of the *Quake* community; many of the same players are now looking for a more light-hearted approach to gibbing their opponents.

Next Month

www.heat.net

Next month we'll be taking a look at Sega's Heat.net, currently running free gaming on-line for PC owners in the US, and what the implications are for the on-line gaming future. We'll also be seeing what all this has to do with the spec of the new Sega console.

Little Big Adventure 2

The end of *LBA2* is in sight, but can you defeat the evil FunRock or are you destined to lollop around the game's many lands forever? Follow Twinsen through the final part of our exhaustive playing guide and you are sure to see peace restored to Twinsun.

CHAPTER 7

The lift exit was closed by a grill and I had to use my magic ball in 'discreet mode' to activate the switch at the end of the room and open the doors. Outside, I found myself on a platform linked to a band of rocks that formed an island. A sea of melting lava surrounded everything. Moving on, I passed in front of buildings belonging to the Building Company and a gemstone mine entrance. A little bit further on, the path brought me to a village. It was here that the Blafards lived. Around the village, I saw a toad. I kissed it and although it didn't transform into a beautiful princess, it did give me some strength back, which was very welcome after my recent battles.

The villagers advised me to go and see Mr Lemoine, who would know which path to take to the Mosquibees' village.

The chapel door was firmly closed, and to enter it I first had to go and see a

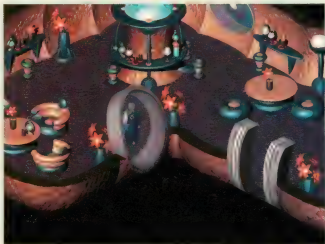
family who offered me some fiery tart, yuk... I took an extra place to give to the old rogue in the centre of the village. In

exchange, he gave me the chapel key. I went into the chapel and met

Mr Lemoine. He told me that the best thing was to hire the services of the ferryman. I needed to find some

gems, then call him by singing a special tune. His servant knew the tune very well and that proved enough to go and see her.

So, I learnt to sing the chorus then I returned to the mine to find some gems. I managed to collect quite a few, as well as a glove used by miners to protect themselves from the lava and fire. On the path, I also found the entrance to a tunnel which brought me out near the Blafards' fragment. But a shower of



Just another day spent lounging in the icea-rich cavern that Twinsen likes to call home.

fireballs made access a little difficult. The protection spell was definitely needed to prevent some serious injury.

Leaving the mine, I headed for the ferryman's calling place and hummed the song. He arrived, slowly, and in a frightening and booming voice asked:

"Whoever wishes to cross the ocean of fire must pay me. My price is four gems. Where do you want to go?"

Aboard his boat, I crossed the melting sea, and later found myself at the Mosquibees' village. It looked like a cocoon stuck to a cliff. A guard was flying below.

I approached him, and he demanded to know what I was doing here. I told him that I needed to see the Queen. He took me up into the air and dropped me in front of Her Majesty the Queen. This is what she said to me:

"My rebel friend has confirmed to me that you are a Twinsunian. He took part in some missions on your planet. He saw how the Emperor's soldiers behaved. We know

that Dark Monk and the Emperor have lied to us, that they have kidnapped your wizards and children. But you, what are you doing here?"

"I've come to get your help. Dark Monk and the Emperor have built a reactor on the Emerald moon. They're planning to destroy my planet during the next ceremony where Dark Moon has promised to perform his miracle."

"And what can we do?"
"The control centre is on CX Island and the only access is a passage which goes from the gas underworld. The rebels above have said that those here could help me."

"Can you prove all this?"
To show I was telling the truth, I showed her the ring that Johnny had given me. A Mosquibee standing on one side of the throne said:

"Our secret calling sign! I believe he speaks the truth your Majesty."
"But he is not a Mosquibee. To become one of us, you are going to have to demonstrate your courage and pass the truth test... After that, we will help you."

To pass the test, I found myself in a ring. Thanks to my magic ball, I easily broke the rolling balls to find a key and open the correct door. Once inside, I found the Sabaroton, which was a very sophisticated blowpipe.

No sooner had the Queen congratulated me than a Mosquibee soldier announced that Imperial Parachutists were landing. They





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Twinsen foolishly pays little heed to the local government literature warning people not to "act like madcap fools" in the local power station.



threatened the village and the Queen had to flee. With some other Mosquibees, I left towards the interior of the cocoon in the direction of the battle. I crossed the place under a hail of enemy shots. I left the cocoon via an opening which led to a path running along the top of the cliffs. I followed it and soon found myself opposite a footbridge, which I crossed. On the other side, up a rocky peak, the Mosquibees' fragment lay inside a locked chest. The monster who protected it launched fireballs, and it was thanks to the Blafard glove that I could throw them back at him. I had noticed that he launched fireballs with his head tilted back, which suggested the right moment to use my gloves. I had to repeat this four times before he disappeared, leaving the key to the chest.

Now that I had this new fragment, I retraced my steps, crossing the cocoon, and found another exit which led to the beach where I had arrived. I went to the rocks in the direction of the ferryman's calling point. Having found four new gems, I called out for him. He didn't take long to arrive and this time took me to the volcano island.

Dali-esque images abound in *LB&Z*. The elephant is a potent symbol of man's gluttony, while the giraffe's slender neck is a metaphor for, or, long necked things.



The spot was at the foot of the rocky peak supporting the Celebration Volcano above gas floods. I had to avoid the lava flows and fire geysers so that I could find the small cave where some Mosquibee refugees were. They had fled during the attack. According to them, the Queen was being held in the vicinity of the Building Company on Blafard Island.

I returned there. A few metres from the ferryman's kiosk, on a rock near the lava, I met a wounded Blafard, whom I cured with the aid of the Conch of Triton. To thank me, he revealed some important information. He confirmed that the Queen was being held in the Building Company prison, but he suggested that I make my way via the mine to reach her. He told me to follow the moving walkways. Then, after climbing onto some vertical conveyors, I found myself in a room where boxes were being moved. I hid inside one of them, allowing me to leave the place. On the other side I jumped nimbly out of the box onto a ladder.

Reaching the roof, I spied a sort of pipe across the ground, through which I slid as far as the Queen's cell. Her Majesty gave me the key to open the secret passage leading to CX Island when I left once more for the Mosquibees' village.

In the cocoon behind the throne, I found the famous passage. I used the key on the throne and the back tipped out. I advanced cautiously...



and then turned right into another room, once I'd taken the key in the red box which was behind a guard who kept firing at me. From this room, a lift took me to the main control centre where the Emperor and the red launch button were.

The Emperor spoke:

"It's over Twinsin, you've lost. And to make your defeat even more bitter, I'm going to reveal the truth. With all these religious beliefs, I wasn't master of my own planet. The people only listened to the teachings of Dark Monk priests. One day, a stranger stopped on Zeelich and suggested a way to pass himself off as Dark Monk. Together, we made them believe he was going to fulfil the big prophecy. Of course, the truth is otherwise. I don't know why, but Dark Monk wanted to take over the magical energy contained in your planet. Since I wanted to become Master of Zeelich, we made a deal!"

"That's impossible, I won't let you!"

"Twinsin, Dark Monk is invincible. In his statue, he's built a machine capable of storing all the stolen magical energy from your planet. My men went to Twinsin to kidnap your wizards because we needed them to attract your planet's energy to Zeelich. Then we kidnapped your children when the wizards refused to co-operate. You were our only obstacle. From now on, we've won. At the next ceremony, we will destroy Twinsin."

CHAPTER 8

The exit led directly onto CX Island at the corner of a well-guarded gateway. After dispensing with some guards who didn't want to let me pass, I tried one of the two doors and entered a gas-filled room. Thanks to my Super-Jetpack, I crossed it, watching out for monsters coming out from the gas. Then another gateway led me to the shuttle launch area. From there, I went to the central tower



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and use the machine. Even you won't be able to stop the lunar reactors."

I tried to stop him, but as the battle turned in my favour, in a last ditch effort, he managed to activate the lunar reactor.

Seconds later, Sendell appeared to warn me:

"Twinsen, a cosmic cataclysm has started. The moon has begun to move. It'll soon point towards Twinsun and destroy our planet!"

"But what can I do to stop it?"

"You must stop Dark Monk from using the diabolical machine that he's constructed in the statue. It could attract and steal the energy we could use to stop the moon."

"But how can I get inside the statue? It's in Celebration Volcano and completely inaccessible."

"You must bring together the four key fragments that the people of Esmer protect and display at each ceremony. With these, the Dark Monk statue will leave the crater. When you have stopped Dark Monk, you must get back to Twinsun and in the Shaft of Sendell, I will help you to stop the moon."

I took the lift again and this time, with the help of the Emperor's sabre, I managed to get by the hussars who guarded the control tower door. They didn't leave me time to admire their magnificent uniforms and I had to use my new weapon, which proved very efficient. In the control tower, I took a route disc. A little bit later, outside the tower, I boarded the Emperor's personal shuttle and headed for Otringal.

CHAPTER 9

In order to save my planet, I had to grab the Sup's fragment, hidden in the Imperial Palace, before returning to Celebration Island to confront Dark Monk.

Eliminating the hussars who guarded the entrance to the palace, I slipped inside. The route to the Sup's fragment was a labyrinth protected by a load of soldiers, fishbills, hussars and all kinds of mercenaries. With great difficulty, I got to the fragment chest. The ultimate palace guardian, a Streum with two heads, didn't last long against the



Emperor's sabre. I took the last missing fragment. Behind the chest, I saw a strange looking stained glass window. Throwing my magic ball in 'discreet mode', I broke it and discovered a secret passage which led me outside via a shortcut, and meant me not having to retrace my steps. I left the palace with the four Zeelichian fragments and headed for Celebration Island.

CHAPTER 10

At the volcano summit, inside a little temple by the edge of the crater, I inserted the four fragments that together made up the sacred key. At that moment, a violent trembling and terrible noise shook the whole island. Inside the crater, a gigantic statue of Dark Monk rose from the lava and came to rest in front of the little temple where I stood. I found Dark Monk standing on the Great Book of Names. He stared at me and revealed his true face to the dumbstruck eyes of the four Zeelichian races:

"At last Twinsen I've found you! But this time it is too late. With the Emperor's help, I have tricked the Esmer. How ironic that they

believed I was Dark Monk reincarnated and granted me divine powers that I didn't possess. Thanks to the Esmer, I will finally get them when the moon blows up Twinsun."

"And what did you do with the children and the wizards?"

"I needed the wizards to work the machine that I built in the statue. It will attract the magical energy of Sendell contained at the heart of Twinsun and which will be drawn from the explosion. The children were a means of persuading the wizards to obey me."

"You are vile, FunFrack, and I'll prevent you from doing it!"

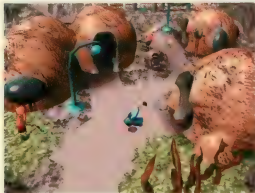
A UFO lands in Twinsun, and residents held a 'who's the strangest looking' competition. The purple alien wins by a head. But no legs.



A hot air balloon, or a boat? In Twinsun there's every chance it's both.



The small children's park in Twinsun boasts a number of recreational play-things. Most popular is the taxing 'tabular funhouse' on the right. Hours of pleasure, natch.



"You're welcome Twinsun, you too have helped me. The statue will act as an aerial and I needed the four fragments to put it in the ceremonial position. I had sent my mercenaries, but you managed to elude them all the same. Congratulations. Now you will attend the final destruction of your planet and my conversion. I only have to activate the machine and the cosmic shock will take place, the Sendell's energy will belong to me. It will make me the equivalent of a God."

FunFrock disappeared inside the statue. Without waiting, I gave chase. I climbed from pillar to pillar before reaching the statue's arms. I entered this immense stone body. There I found the wizards,

locked in cages for the machine to use their magical powers. Turning the screens on in the right order - second, first, fourth and finally third, I managed to unlock the cages after pressing the final opening switch.

Thanks to their powers, they destroyed an iron gate which barred my way. I told them to go and fetch Baldino urgently while I went to confront FunFrock and save the children. They all left and I found my old enemy on the next floor up. He started to lower the cage which held the children. Then he disappeared into a teleporter...

With the help of the Nitro-Meca-Penguins that I'd bought on Citadel Island and those that I'd found in a hidden cave in FunFrock's statue, I destroyed FunFrock's grobo clones. Some of them, easily recognisable by their torpedo launchers, guarded the keys which let me go down progressively in search of FunFrock. Later I found everyone at the level of the statue's feet. At last I finally faced FunFrock, who had time to break the chain that was holding the cage full of children. It fell into the lava, there was nothing I could do to prevent it. Consumed with rage, I turned on FunFrock inflicting a ruthless punishment.

Then, by a miracle, Baldino appeared before my eyes aboard his ship. The wizards managed to join him and they had arrived in time to save the children. The cage, which didn't have time to touch the lava, fell on Jérôme's ship.

I climbed aboard and asked Baldino to get us back to Twinsun as fast as possible.

Meanwhile, the Zeelichians looked on as the volcano exploded and the gas

and the monsters it contained were sucked inside. Moments later, Zeelich returned to its original paradise, fulfilling the hopes of all its inhabitants.

Thanks to the gazeoom, Jérôme had improved his ship's capability and we were there in a fraction of a second. Inside the Shaft of Sendell, helped by the Goddess, I tried to push back the moon. Unfortunately I was only able to slow it down. Fortunately the Esmer fleet, commanded by Johnny Rocket and the Mosquibee Queen, appeared. They bombarded and destroyed the lunar reactor and I managed at last to put the Emerald moon back in its orbit. Once more I had saved Twinsun and all its people.

EPILOGUE

Some time later on Citadel Island, under brilliant sunshine the people of Twinsun and Esmer met up on the occasion of the Big Festival. Johnny Rocket came to shake my hand and say a few words:

"Thank you, Twinsun. Without you, who knows what would have happened to our planets."

"It's you that must be thanked. Without your help, Sendell and I would never have managed to force the moon back."

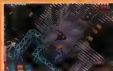
"That was the least we could do. You have fulfilled our prophecy. Our planet has become once more the paradise it was meant to be. You saved Zeelich from the dictatorship intended by our Emperor. But better than that, you wrecked FunFrock's attempt to carry out his plans. You have saved our two planets!"

"The main thing is that peace has been restored."

Parts 1 and 2 of our LBA2 playing guide can be found in PCG 48 and PCG 49 respectively. If you'd like to order back issues, turn to page 187.

Surrender to

PARADISE



Q & A

Like a sturdy pair of double-seamed Marks and Spencers Y-fronts, Q&A is here once again to offer you support where you need it most.

By ALAN DEXTER



SHADOW OF THE COMET

Q I'm having a bit of trouble with Infogrames' great game. I have managed to get as far as Day 3 and have got to the point where you have to destroy the evil Indian guy down in the well. Every time I try to use the Indian's lair, though, I either get melted or stuck to the floor. Have I missed something? I have enclosed an inventory list (thank you). I hope someone can help, as I've been stuck for ages.

Craig Jones, North Wales

A *Shadow Of The Comet*: sounds like a good reason for mass ritual suicide to me, but that's another thing altogether. Right, here we have someone who is so near the end that it's painful to steal the last bit of joy away from them, but that's what we're here for. We'll take it from Nataswanga's quiz. Go to the well and look down it. Then go east and throw the pot of paint into the water. Next go east and get the empty can and the can of acid, but don't pick up any other can. Next go east and get the two flints. Go towards the middle of the screen and use the empty can until you get naphtha. Next go south and use the can of naphtha, use the flints, then the bow. Get the turquoise, the aquamarine and the butterfly. Go and use the empty can on the naphtha again to fill it up. Use the turquoise and Nataswanga's ring. Good luck, you've nearly done it.

DISCWOULD 2

Q Help! Help me, please! I've got to Death's house and collected all I can, but I can't cut the corn because Rincewind complains about his back.

Roger Doe, Shropshire



Over To You...

Well, after months of selfishness and non-communication you've finally taken it upon yourselves to aid your fellow man. It's a shame that everybody just wants to

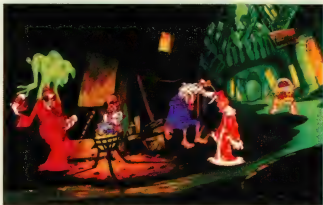
help Mathew Wilkes with his *Broken Sword* problem, though we've had more than 30 solutions, so please don't send any more. This month's lucky recipient of a random box with something shiny inside is **Danny Premak** for his detailed solution for *Daggerfall*.

A Here's an answer for David, and his problems with *Daggerfall*. The maid, Cynclassa, who told you to get Myrissara, lives in the same castle as Myrissara. That's *Daggerfall* castle. When you enter the castle and get past the guards, you get to the mail hall. If you go up the

steps, you meet the King and Queen (among others). There are doors at either side of the steps, the left leads to Cynclassa's room and the right one to Myrissara's. She is always there, but will refuse to talk to you if you are in the middle of a quest involving her. If you are

uncertain, use the 'look at' option, and the name should show up. Just bear in mind that a guard will attack you for entering a royal room. Just get out of the castle and enter again, or cut them to pieces for interfering with your plans.

Danny Premak, Norway



A I bought my copy of *Discworld 2* from someone called CMOT Dibble, so I'm not sure whether mine is the same as yours, but we'll give it a go. According to my calculations you are less than an hour away from completing the game, so it seems a bit of a shame to help you out, but then, I don't know you from Jack - a hugely unpopular fellow - so here goes.

Seeing as you haven't told me what you've got from the house, I'll start at the beginning. Go to the hour-glass room, get the ink, and ring the bell. Go downstairs, and go left in the kitchen. Get the sugar cube, the oily rag, and then open the stove door. Go back into the hall, and open the curtains. Get the scythe from the umbrella stand (the potential for a costly rainy-day mistake is superb). Go upstairs and enter Susan's room. Get the rabbit from the bed and double click on it to get the pyamas. Get the string, go back downstairs and enter the book room on the right. Get Rincewind's book - it's the middle of the three. Next go to the kitchen and talk to Albert. Go to the stables, get the rope and give the sugar cube to Blinky. Use the glue on the saddle and then use the saddle. Finally use Blinky. Use the matches on the oily rag. Stand near the hives, and use the pyamas on Rincewind. Use the oily rag on the hive. Get the wax from the hive. Use the pot to get some honey from the hive. Go right

to the pond, where you can take the fishing rod from the gnome. Use the rod on the honey. Use the rod and honey on the dots in the soul pool. Look at the cart. Talk to the little girl about the cart. Give her your book. Use the ink on the pond and then use the curtains on the pond. Next go back to the book room and light the candle with the matches. Put the candle in Rincewind's inventory. Use the key on the alcove and then enter it. Use the candle and then get the tablet. Go to the garden and give the tablet to Susan. Use the boomerang on the rope. Go to the front of the house and use the boomerang/rope on the chimney. Go inside and show the robe and scythe to Albert. Use the cart on the scythe, so you can use the cart/scythe contraption on the corn. The rest, as they say, is up to you.

MONKEY ISLAND 2

Q I've read your complete guide and still appear to be stuck on the splitting contest. I've blown the ship's horn, moved the flags, and used the green spit thickener, but I can still only reach second place. Please help me before I give up.

Scott MacDowall, Kent

A The Curse Of Monkey Island isn't long off now, I can almost smell it - the brine, you see. I can hear the chattering monkeys in my head already.

Stuck on the splitting contest, surely not? What's up, can't you get the length? It's quite simple really, although you seem to have come quite far already. You see, my boy, it's all to do with the wind. If you look along the line of spectators, you will see that all of them has a sadh root near waist that rises and falls with the wind. Keep a very close eye





on this sash, and get your icon over the PT001E option. When the wind grabs hold of the sash click away. If you've timed it right, your phlegm should rise through the air and carry you into first place so you can pick up that charming plaque.

DREAMWEB

Q Help! I'm stuck. I've killed the general and got into the Sartain Industries. Now what do I do? How do you activate the security computer?

Paul Coltman, Oxfordshire

A I remember when *DreamWeb* came out, it had a really cool advert. Didn't actually think the game was up to that much, but then you can't have everything.

Right, you don't actually need to use the security computer. You should have picked up a cartridge about Sartain Industries at Eden's flat, along with their address. Put the cartridge into the interface in your flat, log on as Ryan and then list cartridge. Read about the meeting and then read the code for the Sartain Industries keypad. 7833. Now go to Sartain Industries on the travel screen. Walk into the building and open your inventory to use the gun. Go left and enter the lift and use the controls. Once in combat you'll want to open your inventory, examine and then use the crystal. Walk down and then enter the small door on the right. Examine the briefcase, open it and take the papers. Examine the papers - this will tell you about Underwood and Chapel. Next go upstairs and onto the roof. Go left onto the helipad, where you can use the gun to blow up the helicopter. The next dream sequence should now take place. See, no computers at all...



CHRONOMASTER

Q Can anybody help me? I'm on Cabal and need to know what the things are I'm supposed to use on the cauldron in the Geode cavern, and where to get them. I've used the log, the fire blast spell, the water, the forceful winds spell, the handful of earth, and the ladle to stir it, but whenever I drink it I always die. What am I missing or doing wrong?

John Calder, Tross

A If you had listened to your teacher in English, you would have known that the only ingredients for cauldrons are hubble, bubble, toll and trouble. But enough of that. We'll start from the witch's garden, and you should be able to see your little mistake, and what you're missing. Use the rose on the garden, water it with the watering can, take the rose and you'll get a geode. Use the knife on the geode, and then the hammer on the stuck knife - now you can use the cut geode on the garden. Enter the grown geode. Once inside use the screwdriver on the yellow-green crystal from the wall of the geode, and crush it with the hammer. Take a log and the ladle, use the log on the cauldron, and the feather on the log. Use the watering can on the cauldron, take the ember from the floor, and put it into the cauldron. Use the loadstone on the feathers in your inventory, then use magic foil on the crushed feather and use the spell on the cauldron. Add some earth from your inventory to the pot, and stir with the ladle. Add the crushed

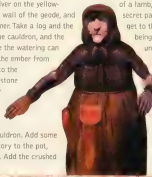
crystal (from the wall of the geode) into the pot, and stir once again. Take the pot and return to Jester so you can head for Verdy.

ATLANTIS

Q I recently bought this game, but I'm having a few problems. I seem to be looking for the Scarlet Cockerel. The man told me it's in the building with the red rooster over the door. I can't look very far, because there's some sort of guard with a sword, and if you cross his path he throws the sword and kills Seth. Please help me, as this is quite annoying.

Miss E. Buchan, Scotland

A I would imagine that being sword-thrown-to-death is a bit more than annoying - you seem to be taking it very well. Beautiful game, though, really quite clever. You need to go and talk to Lascot in the corner of the palace courtyard. He will give you a figurine of a lamb, and explain how to access a secret passage that will allow you to get to the Scarlet Cockerel without being seen by the guards. Wait until Lascot has had time to engage the guard in conversation, then slip through the door into the palace. Move towards the door on the left in order to avoid being seen by the guard in the gallery beyond. When you hear the guard's footsteps, move forward and up the stairs to your left.



A In issue 48, Joan and Anee from Lancashire were seeking help with the octopus in *Hand Of Fate*. The answer to the problem is as follows: Zanthia needs a lucky horseshoe, which can be found in Farmer Greenberry's collar. To see if it's lucky, click it on

Zanthia. Before the game with the octopus is started, place the lucky horseshoe on the ground. There, that should solve the problem for you.

David Bryant, Suffolk

Q I'm stuck in *The Lost Files Of Sherlock Holmes: The*

Case Of The Rose Tattoo. In weary punt, I can't go to the other room. The bodyguard won't let me in. Sherlock has disguised himself to gain entry but I think something else must be done. Some hints would be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

Levent Kutukculer, Turkey

Q Please help! I can't find Allanar in *Star Trek The Next Generation: A Final Unity*. The ship's computer mentions some co-ordinates +4200g 18m 27s and also sub space bandwidths G through K - but what do they mean?

Stephen Dunn, Ilford

Q Please could you tell me how to get the 'key of tears' in *Realms Of The Haunting*. I have tried to find something to fit in the floor but there doesn't seem to be anything. I would be most grateful for your help. Any cheats?

Wayne Hughes, Leicestershire

Customer Help-Lines

Most publishers offer their own games support service, so if you're stuck on one of their titles, it's always worth phoning them directly.

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Elito	01922 558852
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Gamelek	07753 553445
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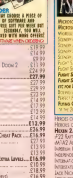
Send your questions, answers, tips, cheats or game solutions to us now! Mark your envelope clearly with Q&A, Over To You or the name of the game you've typed and send it to: PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

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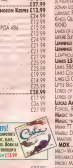
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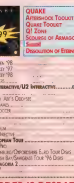


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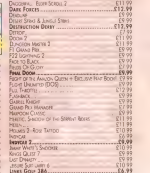


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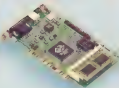
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Seasonal spice

Starting to think about Christmas? Think PC. In particular one of the three recommended systems Simon Williams has unearthed. Suitable for any pocket, as long as it's deep and has a lot of money in it.

GETTING READY FOR Christmas inevitably leads to thoughts of Bendicks Bittermints and lots of beer – sorry, to thoughts of pooling your savings on that new games mega-system. This year, you'll get stacks more for your money than last, as processor, memory and hard drive prices have continued to drop through the year. Where in December '96 you would have got a Pentium 133 with 16Mb of memory and a 1.5Gb hard drive, you'll now get a Pentium MMX 200 with 32Mb and 4Gb. The hardware's catching up with the games again, so now is a really good time to throw out the 486. Here are three more reasons.

Tiny Home Entertainment Centre

£1,996 – Tiny Computers 01293 821333

Tiny are unusual, in that they model themselves as a retail chain, like the ill-fated Eason, but order, import and build all their machines themselves. This means they can cut prices right back. They also sell only Intel processors in their kit, so Intel like them and give them the new stuff early on.

This machine is one of the first PCs available with a Pentium II backed by the new LX chipset and the Accelerated Graphics Port, about which you'll hear much more in 1998. It should improve video performance considerably, by offering the video chips direct fast access to the main processor. In this machine the ATI



Loud, juicy sounds from a trio of big speakers add to fast, smooth graphics from the ATI AGP video card in this top-of-the-range Tiny Home Entertainment Centre. It's far from cheap, though, at £1,996.

Rage Pro card sits in a separate AGP socket and works with a fast 233MHz Pentium II.

Just to show how well this can work on the supplied 17 inch monitor, copies of *Formula 1* (lame sound) and *Terracide* (good throughout) are supplied to show it off. It's pretty spectacular and the full-screen video or TV, from the installed TV tuner card, is next to flawless.

You shouldn't have any problems with storage, either, as there's a 4Gb Fujitsu hard drive in there, coupled to a 12-speed Panasonic CD-ROM drive. When I benchmarked the

machine, it wasn't as fast as I expected, given the new technology, but it's still round about two and a half times faster than a 1995 Pentium.

If the price is a bit steep for you, you might like to know that Tiny are thinking of producing an even more gamey system, without the TV tuner but with *MechWarrior 2*, *Haruc*, *Actua Soccer*, *Terminal Velocity* and *Normality* thrown in at a price closer to £1,750. If you go for either system, though, you should be getting a very good PC deal.

PC GAMER Verdict

74%

On the Side

Some thoughts on recent technical developments...

I spent an interesting day at the European Computer Trade Show, known to its friends as ECTS, recently. This is where manufacturers show off all the new games titles destined for release between Christmas '97 and the spring of '98. It's also a place to promote any up-and-coming hardware. Most of the games news appeared in last month's PC GAMER, so I'll concentrate here on the other bits and pieces that caught my eye.

3Dfx vs PowerVR

Guillemot, pronounced 'Geel-mo', not 'Gilly-mot', had its new 3Dfx card, the Maxi Gamer 3Dfx, on show. This uses the 3Dfx Voodoo chipset and adds quality 3D to your existing 2D graphics card, assuming you have at least a Pentium 90. It comes with 4Mb of its own memory and an option for a TV tuner add-on.

One of the best things about the card is a price of just £117, one of the lowest around, but it doesn't

come with any bundled games. The card is available from Eagle Direct on 0800 7316 150.

The main rival to 3Dfx is Videologic's PowerVR, and its Apocalypse 3Dx has been reduced to a street price of even less than that. Coincidence? I think not. With the Apocalypse 3Dx you get *Ultimate Race* with three tracks, *WipeOut 2097*, *Tomb Raider*, *Terracide* and *MechWarrior 2*. See our feature on page 64 for more.



A new price point for 3Dfx Voodoo add-on 3D cards, the Maxi Gamer 3Dfx provides the kinds of textures and transparency which bring the latest games to life.



You half expect the Packard Bell Pulsar 20 to start whistling tunelessly at you and asking where C3PO's got to.

Pulsar 20 Tower

£1,599 - Packard Bell 01628 508200

Packard Bell's industrial designers have been working overtime to come up with a PC that looks like a small, over-worked droid. It's not an unattractive droid, though, with the floppy drive and 24-speed CD-ROM moulded into the domed top and a cover which slides down to reveal three spare drive bays below.

The Pulsar is a wide machine and there's a lot of space inside. A 200MHz Pentium MMX processor is matched to 16Mb of memory and there's a 3.2Gb Quantum hard drive providing plenty of long-term storage. Video output is integrated onto the main board and takes the form of an ATI 3D Rage II with 2Mb of memory. This is displayed on a multimedia monitor with integral speakers. Although the screen diagonal is small for a 15-inch unit, the picture's clear and sharp.

The Pulsar's performance is only fair for a 200MHz machine, but is still fast enough to run all the supplied software smoothly. As well as a good applications bundle, including Microsoft Word, Works and Encarta, there's

MDK and SWIV 3D. Before you get too excited, though, MDK is provided in the limited Laguna Beach, single-mission version, so probably won't last you more than an evening.

Even so, this is a stylish machine with a good combination of components, including, for instance, a 56K modem and the stereo enhancer SRS on its peculiar triangular sound card. A good buy at a reasonable price.

PC GAMER Verdict

83%

Tashika Multimedia

£799 - Software Warehouse 01675 466467

If money's tight, you can still do very well for yourself this Christmas, as long as you know where to look. Tashika, a new brand name sold through Software Warehouse retail shops and mail order, offers a lot for very little money. The desktop case can hold three 5.25-inch drives and four at 3.5 inches. An eight-speed GoldStar CD-ROM drive, a 1.5Gb Quantum hard drive and a floppy are fitted in three of them. The CD-ROM drive makes enough of a swishing noise to annoy

when playing music CDs, but I imagine (and hope) that this is a one-off problem.

Inside, there's a tight little system board with one of AMD's K6 processors running at 166MHz, a full 512K of secondary cache and two 8Mb SIMMs for main memory. A Yamaha 16-bit sound card, which feeds out to a small and tiny pair of speakers, is matched with a 33.6Kbps fax modem in two of the three ISA slots, and an ATI Graphics Xpression + video card sits in one of the four PCI slots.

Software Warehouse supplied a fairly curvy-screened, 14-inch monitor with the machine (what do you expect for £799?) with a bare minimum of controls, but decent enough electronics to give a good picture at 800 by 600. I wouldn't push it any higher, though.

The Mitsumi keyboard is fairly lifeless and uninspiring, while the Mitsumi mouse is large enough to fit your hand nearly as well as a Microsoft one. The only software is a copy of the integrated suite Lotus SmartSuite, but this is more than you normally get. You have to provide your own games, but judging by the ones I tried, the processor and video card are strong enough to push most of the current best sellers around the screen pretty smoothly. All in all, it's hard to carp when you have this specification of machine at under £800. A Christmas cracker.

PC GAMER Verdict

76%



You couldn't tell by looking, but this 166MHz K6-powered desktop costs just £799 all in. That's really not a bad price for an MMX machine with a good cache and above average graphics card.

Ball bashing

If, like me, you find it difficult to relate to the cursor keys when controlling first-person killers, star-fighters and helicopter gunships, the £50 Space Orb 360 feels like being an ideal substitute. As the name suggests to anybody into royal regalia, the main part of this controller is a small ball, about the size of a table tennis ball, but blacker and with a rubbery surface.

You hold this in your left hand,

while your right rests on twin fire buttons and holds the main body of the Space Orb. You can now pull and push the ball, move it from side to side or twist it to simulate just about any kind of movement you want. There's already support for plenty of first-person games and more coming along each week. You can program ball movements to simulate just about any function you want, too. Again handled by Guillemot in the UK, ask your dealer for more details.



The SpaceOrb 360 could just about get me on an even keel with the keyboard *Quake* fiends I normally play against... and lose to.

THE MONEY

Your disposable income disposed of.

Gravis/THE Games 01703 653377



For many years Gravis created *the* PC joystick – small, rugged and responsive – and this is the culmination of years of careful design. Almost unbelievably rude looking (sales to nunneries are purportedly very strong), your mother would blush if she new about the ‘stiffness’ control on the base. Give it a quick twist from the wrist and the stick can be reduced from floppy and almost unable to stand up on its own to tall, strong and proud. But size counts here, with the stick proving just a little too thin for a good grip. The buttons are responsive, though, and this proves a strong, reliable little work horse.

84%

Primax 01494 680555



Primax are masters of the cheap add-on, which means they aren't too used to building a quality joystick. In fact, the Ultrastriker seems as if it's based on all the joysticks the designers found lying around, but made cheaper. The whole unit is huge, about 20% too big to be comfortable, and the sharp edges soon prove uncomfortable and blister-inducing. The view hat looks as if it could snap off at any moment, and the digital throttle, while cheap and space efficient, is too impractical for prolonged use. In its favour, a mode switch does enable it to emulate both the Thrustmaster and CH Flightstick Pro joysticks.

61%

Thrustmaster 0118 9770725



Design should, by now, be Thrustmaster's ace card, but I can't take to the look of the Millennium 3D. The off-white additions remind me of sickly icing on a cheaply made chocolate cake.

But it's not just the colouring that's weird. The stick itself, while tilting left and right as normal, also twists left and right like Microsoft's Sidewinder Pro to emulate a rudder, while simultaneously rocking backwards and forwards. Unfortunately this last motion just doesn't feel right, and will take a fair bit of getting used to. The plastic looks cheap and unfinished, and the hat is too loose. The other fire buttons are responsive, but overly small.

58%

PIT

It's nearly Christmas, so that must mean it's time for PC GAMER to take a look at new joysticks. Fair enough.

By STEVE OWEN

Golden Image



Possibly the ugliest controller you will ever see, if you were to toss the AlfaBar Plus (possibly the ugliest name you will ever hear) into the air, thousands of X-Philes would report it as a UFO.

About twice the size of an average gamepad, the excess size means that the centre of gravity is too far forward, which is pretty uncomfortable. The eight fire buttons are suitably tactile and click satisfyingly, but the direction pad is too loose and lacks any indication of a response. Perhaps most interestingly, although unlikely to be of any use, is that you can secure it to the desk with the provided suckers. Hmm...

55%

Saitek 0171 278 0050



The serious flight sim fan insists on using an extra throttle unit for added realism. Well I play plenty of flight sims and I would rather spend the 40 quid on a new game or a good night out. A keyboard makes a perfect throttle alternative, and the best joysticks have a fine, if smaller, alternative.

But if you really must spoil yourself so selfishly, Saitek's huge and comfortable offering has things that move, things that twist, things that press, and a big chunky thing that moves backwards and forwards, and lights that do stuff. Programmable to death, Saitek naturally suggest that "for best results" you connect it to their own X36F stick.

73%

Gravis/THE Games 01703 653377



As well as the cheaper, conventional arcade sticks, Gravis have frequently offered us, the grateful punter, some of the more bizarre European designs, such as the Thunderbird. The actual stick design has been used in a few models, and with good reason. Despite appearing painfully angular, it is in fact shockingly comfortable – for my hand at least. Each of the digital and hugely responsive fire buttons is ideally placed and perfectly reachable. The throttle and trim control (for choppers) are perhaps a touch too small considering how large the base is, but these are considerably less important than its plus points. Stylishly grey (?), this stick we like.

87%



WTN!

A Pentium 200 with 3D card

By playing a simple game of Snap

Surely no-one in the developed world can fail to have noticed the attention we gave to DID's *F22 ADF* last month. The masters of flight sims have only gone and done it again with the sim to end all sims. Taking to the sky in your *F22* is an almost immeasurably joyous experience – a fact that had the normally calm and reserved Steve Owen gushing forth over four pages.

It's so far ahead of the competition it's frightening, and has set the combat flight sim standard for a good few years to come. Hell, it even features classified weapons technology that

not even the President of the USA knows about yet. Probably. Anyhow, throw all thoughts of chubby Billy Clinton out of your mind and propel your caution to the wind, because now comes your chance to take-off in heavenly rapture too; for those corporations known as DID and Ocean have decided to celebrate the release of their impossibly good combat game by offering one of you lot the chance to take home a superb P200 MMX boasting an obscenely large 32Mb RAM, plus a copy of their soon-to-be-award-winning (probably) *F22 ADF*.

It's a prize to lie for, fight for, or maybe even construct giant feathered wings and attach them to your arms for. However, what we want you to do is far less exciting, or indeed dangerous, than these things. Read on...



I believe I have correctly matched the pairs.
Should I speak the truth, send the P200 post
haste to my dwellings at:

Name _____
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My most wanted

This part's optional, but we'd like you to let us know the five forthcoming PC games you're most looking forward to, to add us in compiling our Readers Most Wanted chart on page 26

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Send this coupon with your entry to the: 'Fiddle with your pairs' Contest, PC GAMER, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 1BN, to arrive by 31 January.



Does Michael Jackson call himself Cowpoke when he's playing *F22 ADF*? And why is Ginger Spice demonstrating the internationally recognised symbol for a Polo in that picture?

THE "FIDDLE WITH YOUR PAIRS" CONTEST

"You've got a boogie on your six, Clive."

"I can't shake him, Alan."

How ludicrous this exciting mid-air conversation sounds with the crack pilots' tough-sounding monikers being replaced with everyday names.

And yet how cool, clever and enviable the hard men of the skies sound when fighting under the names of Maverick, Rogue, Joeman, and Pair O' Cymbals in the blockbuster movie about American fighter pilots, *Top Gun*.

How much of this was down to the thespians' delivery of the lines and the fast edited combat scenes we will never know. What we do know, however, having proved it under laboratory conditions this month, is that when you get a group of untrained but enthusiastic wannabe pilots in front of computers, the ensuing fracas is rendered hilarious by the sounds of each player shrieking (in their own regional accents): "Eat that, Mark!", "Accept my homer, Matt!", or "I implore you Mr Flynn, please do not continue in your attempt to evade my machine-gun fire".

Basically, if you're going to play a combat flight sim – and if you are, you're better off playing *F22 ADF* than any other – then you need a handle. That is, a hard-as-nails-sounding nickname that'll put the fear of God up the opposition.

To this end, the names Jim, Matt and Mark (however sinister they may sound to you) aren't particularly fear-invoking in the theatre of war that *ADF* offers, and have been ditched in favour of names far too frightening to consider printing here.

And it's not just us that have these handles; famous people have them too. Some of them are well documented (everyone knows, for instance, that Yusuf Islam's *Quake* name was Cat Stevens), but some have remained undiscovered until this week, when classified government documents were finally released to the public.

After trawling through store rooms full of paperwork we eventually found the handles for the famous people listed above-right. All we require of you is to match them to the relevant individual, using your brains and your hands.

That done, pop your coupon in an envelope

and get the whole kit and caboodle off to the usual address.

CELEBRITIES

The Queen
Michael Jackson
The Pope
Adolf Hitler
Jesus Christ
William Hague
Ginger Spice

HANDLES

The Vat Man
Penny Chew
Sasquatch
Cowpoke
Nogbad The Bad
Blonde Tom
Judas Priest

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2. Entries arriving after 31 January will be fashioned into paper aeroplanes.
3. Multiple entries will be used to make a full size papier-mâché pilot.
4. The Editor is known as "Nasal Flame", don't argue with his astonishingly accurate judgement.

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CD GAMER

Christmas is just around the corner and the big hits are stacking up. *Tomb Raider II* looks simply lovely, *Jedi Knight* is simply lovely and *Joint Strike Fighter* will fool you by its loveliness. *Turok*, on the other hand, is beautifully different.

Game of
the Month

• GAME OF THE MONTH

TOMB RAIDER II

Eidos

Platform: EOD, 16MB RAM, Windows 95

With *Tomb Raider II*, Eidos has taken the classic adventure game and made it into a modern masterpiece. The game is a real masterpiece of the genre, and it's a real masterpiece of the genre. The game is a real masterpiece of the genre, and it's a real masterpiece of the genre.

Arrow keys - Directional control

Spacebar - Toggle weapons

Ctrl - Fire or action button

Alt - Jump



End - Bring up

Delete - Save game

Page down - Take the next

Shift & Up arrow - Map

Esc - Inventory

Q (Keyboard) & direction - Look



IMPORTANT

Internet Explorer 4
Microsoft

To install Internet Explorer 4 you MUST be connected to the Internet before the initial program can be started. If you are not on-line, the setup program will not be able to check your Internet connection and will fail, stating that files are missing.

Exit

CD GAMER

Info

Reware

Freeware

Shareware

Datalogue

Demos

The Latest on

• JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

Edits:

Pentium 100 (Pentium 166 recommended), 16Mb RAM, Win95, 3Dfx card optional

The new demo is a game:

It's a 3D action game. You play as a pilot in a fighter jet. You can fly through the air, shoot down enemy planes, and land on a runway. The game is set in a futuristic world where you are the only pilot left standing. You have to fight your way through a series of levels, each with its own set of challenges. The game is very fast-paced and action-packed. It's a great way to spend some time. The game is very easy to play. You can play it on a PC or a console. The game is very fun. It's a great way to spend some time. The game is very easy to play. You can play it on a PC or a console. The game is very fun. It's a great way to spend some time.

Basic Flight Controls:

Left/Right arrows - Move

Up/Down arrows -

Up - Climb

Down - Dive

M - Hatch

Space - Fire

W - Forward

S - Backward

Air brakes/roll brake

Engine Controls:

1 through 4 - Engine thrust

5 - Air intake

6 - Fuel

7 - Oil

8 - Water

9 - Air

10 - Fuel

11 - Oil

12 - Water

13 - Air

14 - Fuel

15 - Oil

16 - Water

17 - Air

18 - Fuel

19 - Oil

20 - Water

21 - Air

22 - Fuel

23 - Oil

24 - Water

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26 - Fuel

27 - Oil

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57 - Air

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59 - Oil

60 - Water

61 - Air

62 - Fuel

63 - Oil

64 - Water

65 - Air

66 - Fuel

67 - Oil

68 - Water

69 - Air

70 - Fuel

71 - Oil

72 - Water

All & Spaces - Fire gun

Enter - Battle/Action

W - Up

S - Down

Backspace - Fire

Tab - Up/Down

Ctrl & Tab - Up/Down

Defence Controls:

1 - Up/Down

2 - Up/Down

3 - Up/Down

4 - Up/Down

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69 - Up/Down

70 - Up/Down

• 3D FIGHT

LucasArts

Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, Optional 3Dfx/Power VR support

3D FIGHT is a game. It's a 3D action game. You play as a pilot in a fighter jet. You can fly through the air, shoot down enemy planes, and land on a runway. The game is set in a futuristic world where you are the only pilot left standing. You have to fight your way through a series of levels, each with its own set of challenges. The game is very fast-paced and action-packed. It's a great way to spend some time. The game is very easy to play. You can play it on a PC or a console. The game is very fun. It's a great way to spend some time.

playable demo delivers plenty of action and ending options to keep you busy.

Controls:

Mouse - Look around

W - Forward

S - Backward

A - Left

D - Right

Space - Fire

C - Up/Down

Spacebar - Up/Down

Esc - Menu options



Demos

CLOSE COMBAT: A BRIDGE TOO FAR

Microsoft

Pentium 90 (Pentium 133 recommended), 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

Our exclusive demo of A Bridge Too Far, the eagerly anticipated sequel to popular wargame Close Combat, features the tutorial 'Boot Camp' plus one of the featured battles from the full game, the 'Schijde Road' battle. The control system is similar to most strategy games of the moment, but you must start the game by displaying your troops and artillery. This is achieved by clicking on a unit and dragging it to its

new location within its move radius. Now click on the 'Begin' button to commence the real-time battle action and click and hold the cursor over units to issue them orders such as attack and defend. The best place to start is with the Boot Camp feature walkthrough, which will guide you through the finer points of the control system.

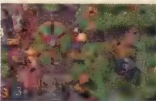
INCUBATION

Blue Byte

Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95



The 4th instalment in the long running Battle Isle series is upon us in the form of Incubation. Our demo features several of the early missions and allows you to sample their impressive new 3D turn-based graphics engine. Control is handled by the mouse.



The Windows 95 Menu

Have you noticed the new and improved Windows 95 menu program will "ask" you for help in using the Windows 95 menu? And, if you're not sure, you can click on the "Help" button in the menu bar to get a list of the menu items and their functions. This is a very useful feature, especially for those who are new to Windows 95. The menu program will also help you to find the right menu item for the job you want to do. For example, if you want to open a file, you can click on the "File" menu and then on the "Open" option. The menu program will then show you a list of the files in the current directory, and you can click on the one you want to open. This is a very useful feature, especially for those who are new to Windows 95.

Game of the Week

Clicking to go to the menu bar, you can find the "Game of the Week" button. This button will take you to a list of the games that are available for purchase on CD-ROM. The list includes the game's name, the publisher, and the price. You can click on the name of the game to get more information about it, or you can click on the "Purchase" button to buy the game.

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The Windows 95 Menu

The Windows 95 menu is a very useful feature. It allows you to find the right menu item for the job you want to do. For example, if you want to open a file, you can click on the "File" menu and then on the "Open" option. The menu program will then show you a list of the files in the current directory, and you can click on the one you want to open. This is a very useful feature, especially for those who are new to Windows 95.

The Best Deal

Clicking to go to the menu bar, you can find the "Best Deal" button. This button will take you to a list of the games that are available for purchase on CD-ROM. The list includes the game's name, the publisher, and the price. You can click on the name of the game to get more information about it, or you can click on the "Purchase" button to buy the game.

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TV GAME CD Review

Secrets of the Mind

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Secrets of the Mind

click on a unit and then click on one of the available move points in that turn or click on an enemy to engage in combat. Leave your mouse cursor over the icons on the side and bottom interface panels and you'll get a short description as to their operation.

7TH LEGION

Epic MegaGames/MicroProse

Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

This is the shareware version of 7th Legion, a promising new real-time strategy war game. It's similar to other C&C-type games in that you have to construct a base and army and try to destroy all enemy units. Where 7th Legion differs is in the special objectives you are given during play and the magical cards which give your units extra powers and abilities. For our full review turn to page 135.

Ctrl & attack Forces an attack (even on your own units and buildings)

Esc Game menu

Ctrl-1 through Ctrl-0 Store detachment

1 through 0 Recall stored detachment

R Toggle building repair on/off

Shift & left mouse button Add unit to current group

Right mouse button on unit Select all friendly units on visible screen performing same action

Home Centre view on base

End Go back to the view before you pressed Home

I Toggle infrared radar

T Toggle radar on/off

V Centre view on select unit(s)



CYBER GLADIATORS

Sierra On-Line

Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, optional 3Dfx card

This demo contains two of the fighters and one arena from the game Cyber Gladiators. Upon entering the fight arena, you can take control of either fighter simply by pressing the keys assigned to player one (for the fighter on the left) or player two (for the fighter on the right).

Player One:

A Move left

D Move right

W Up (Jump)

S Down (crouch)

K Speed punch

I Power punch

L Speed Kick

J Power Kick

Space Start

Player Two:

Cursor key left Move left

Cursor key right Move right

Cursor key up Up (Jump)

Cursor key down Down (crouch)

Numeric keypad 5 Speed punch

Numeric keypad 8 Power punch

Numeric keypad 6 Speed kick

Numeric keypad 4 Power kick

Enter Start

DARK ANGEL

Vicarious Visions Inc.

Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

Dark Angel is a side-scrolling action/adventure game. You control Carina, the aforementioned Dark Angel in a quest to quell the evil forces of Chaos in the Cathedral of Avalon. Our demo features one of the 24 levels from the finished game.

Left arrow Move left

Right arrow Move right

Up arrow Jump/climb up

Down arrow Action (enter; climb down, use lever or mechanism, use inventory object, enter a door/corridor)

Home Flip left (Non-weapons mode only)

Page up Flip right (Non-weapons mode only)

Insert Toggle between weapons/non-weapons

Made

End Cycle through available weapons

Page down Cycle through available superpowers

Delete Duck

P Pause game

T Talk to a character

H Use Holy Water on Carina

1 through 4 Select weapon

5 through 9 Select superpower

Esc Return to Main Menu

F2 Take a screenshot

F5 Save a game in progress

GALAPAGOS

Anark Game Studios

Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, Optional PowerVR and 3Dfx support

In this Galapagos demo you must assist Mendel on an autonomous creature, along an escape route through one of the many sectors from the full game. Although you can't control him directly, you can click on certain parts of the scenery to aid his progress. Control is handled by moving the mouse pointer over the landscape and clicking on whatever you fancy.



HEXEN II

Activision

Pentium 90, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, support for some OpenGL 3D cards (requires 24Mb RAM minimum)



The long-awaited shareware version of Hexen II does not disappoint. Original Hexen fans should jump straight in, but we recommend that the rest of you have a look through the superb HTML-based help file located in the installation directory (requires a suitable Web browser).

Movement:

Arrow keys Move character

Mouse left/right Turn

Spacebar Jump/swim

Shift Run

< Side-step left

> Side-step right

Alt Strafe

DVC Swim up/down

] or [Inventory toggle

Enter Inventory use

+ Crouch

A/Z Look up/down

Weapons (Paladin):

1 Gauntlets

2 Vampiric sword

3 Axe

4 Purifier

Weapons (Assassin):

1 Katana

2 Grenades

3 Crossbow

4 Staff of xrt

Misc controls:

Esc Main Menu

F1 Help

F2 Save

F3 Load

F4 Options

F11 Zoom

F12 Screenshot

PAX IMPERIA: EMINENT DOMAIN

Heliotrape

Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

The goal of Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain is nothing short of total domination and the complete destruction of all the enemy forces. Your species will be competing on a galactic scale for limited resources. Only skillful management of each of the game's critical components will lead to victory. Our demo features only a small portion of the full game's sprawling splendour, but there are still several hours of enjoyment to be had.

Turn the page for this month's hottest demos!

HURRICANE PC

P133 MULTIMEDIA PC SYSTEM ONLY £799 + VAT

HX MOTHERBOARD

Uses Intel Triton II HX Motherboard with 6 SIMM Sockets allowing upgrading to 512Mb of fast EDO Memory. Includes 4 PCI and 4 ISA Slots.

VGA MONITOR

Hurricane prices include either a 14" or 15" 28 Dot Pitch S-VGA Colour monitor. To upgrade from a 14" to a 15" monitor add £50-VAT. To upgrade from a 15" to a 17" monitor add £170-VAT.

SPEAKERS

All Multimedia Hurricanes include a pair of quality Zylis 2 Stereo Speakers with 64Watts PMPO.

128mb GRAPHICS CARD

Our competitors use 32-bit or 64-bit Graphics Cards. All Hurricanes include a state-of-the-art STB Lightspeed 128-bit VGA Graphics Card with a Tseng Labs ET6000 VGA Chip & 2Mb of High Performance MDRAM. It has a Graphics Winmark of over 40.0.

24x CD-ROM DRIVE

A high speed 24x MAX CD-ROM is fitted in all Hurricane PCs. Most other competitors are still only shipping 8x or 12x drives.

3D WAVETABLE SOUND

All Hurricane PCs come with a powerful Aztech Wavender 32 WaveTable Soundcard, with built-in 3D special effects.

ON-SITE WARRANTY

All systems come with a 1 year On-site Warranty provided by Domestic & General, one of the UK's largest insurance companies.



16mb EDO RAM

Hurricane PCs come supplied with 16bs of FAST EDO RAM. 32ws option available for £70-vat. Upgradable to 512ws.

AUDIO HEADSET

All Hurricanes include an Audio Headset with Boom Arm, Microphone & Headphone.

UP TO 4.3Gb HARD DRIVE

The Hurricane range uses 3.6Gb and 4.3Gb Hard Drives from IBM, with MR Heads and an average access time of 5.5ms. They have an extremely fast rotation speed of 5,400rpm.

512K PIPELINE BURST

Most competitors use only 256K. For extra performance all Hurricane's use 512K of FAST Pipeline Burst Cache.

KEYBOARD & MICROSOFT MOUSE

For full compatibility, all Hurricane's come with an original Microsoft branded PS/2 Mouse. In addition, we include a 105 Key Windows 95 compatible Keyboard, with a tactile test key click.

FREE SOFTWARE

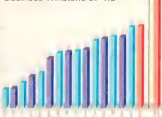


IBM VOICE DICTATION

The new IBM "Simply Speaking" Voice Dictation software package is pre-loaded on Hurricane PCs. This turns your spoken words straight into text all up to 70-100wpm.



Business Winstone 97 1.0



Processor Type	S-VGA Monitor	Hard Drive	CD-ROM Speed	16mb EDO RAM	32mb EDO RAM
AMD K5 100Mhz	14" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£749 vat £1,001.50	£819 vat £1,071.50
AMD K5 133Mhz	14" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£799 vat £1,051.50	£869 vat £1,101.50
INTEL 133Mhz	14" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£849 vat £1,101.50	£919 vat £1,151.50
CYRIX 150+	14" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£849 vat £1,101.50	£919 vat £1,151.50
CYRIX 166+	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£899 vat £1,151.50	£969 vat £1,201.50
AMD K5 166Mhz	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£949 vat £1,191.50	£1,019 vat £1,241.50

Processor Type	S-VGA Monitor	Hard Drive	CD-ROM Speed	16mb EDO RAM	32mb EDO RAM
CYRIX M2 166 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£929 vat £1,181.50	£999 vat £1,231.50
AMD K6 166 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£979 vat £1,231.50	£1,049 vat £1,281.50
INTEL 166 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	3.6Gb EIDE	24 Speed	£1,029 vat £1,281.50	£1,099 vat £1,331.50
AMD K6 200 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	4.3Gb EIDE	24 Speed	N/A	£1,149 vat £1,391.50
INTEL 200 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	4.3Gb EIDE	24 Speed	N/A	£1,199 vat £1,441.50
AMD K6 233 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	4.3Gb EIDE	24 Speed	N/A	£1,249 vat £1,491.50
INTEL 233 MMX	15" 28 Dot Pitch EIDE	4.3Gb EIDE	24 Speed	N/A	£1,299 vat £1,541.50

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Tel. (Home)

Tel. (Work)

Which computer, if any, do you own?

A black and white photograph of two hands, palms facing forward, holding a large, white, stylized number '5' with a thick black outline. The hands are positioned on either side of the number, with the fingers spread. The background is a solid yellow color.

5

AS LIAM AND NOEL SEEM
TO PREFER GESTURES TO WORDS,
YOU'D EXPECT THEM TO
LIKE THE STATION WITH LESS TALK.





RUNE WAR

Arcadium
Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

Rune War is an inventive mix of traditional 13 tile Manjaro, spell casting, and strategic lane combat. Our exclusive demo features three of the fifth game's nine worlds and you must try to out-gut your opponents with the help of fantastic creatures and noncombat mercenaries in this deep and complex strategy title. The rules of the game are fairly complex, so we strongly recommend a thorough read of the 4 file MANUAL.TXT which is located in a DOS directory in the same installation directory.

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER

Acclaim
Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95, 3Dx
Voodoo or Voodoo Rush card required

The action of the first levels is available in this, usually starts in demo of *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. Sadly, the technical complexity of this game means that only Voodoo and Voodoo Rush 3Dfx graphics card users will be able to sample *Turok's* delights, but there has never been a better reason to buy a 3D card.

Arrow keys - Directional control
Ctrl - Fire
Space - Jump
Page up/down - Look up/down
End - Centre view
1 through 9 - Weapon select
A/Z - Alternative weapon select



UPRISING

Cyline
Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

Control your Warthunk in three training missions and one combat mission in this, impressive demo of *Uprising*. The training missions feature a synthesized voice walkthrough of the controls and options available to us, have used the keyboard controls that we have to live with.

Up/down arrows - Walk forward/back
Left/Right arrows - Walk left/right

Mouse - Controls view

Left click - Primary weapon
Right click - Secondary weapon
F9 - Calls in Citadel (Warthunk must be in the claim square of a command bunker)
F12 - Command nearest Citadel. Cycles through multiple Citadels.
F1 - Deploys infantry (must have factory)
F2 - Deploys tank (must have factory)
F3 - Deploys AAV gunship (must have factory)
F4 - Deploys bomber (must have factory)
F5 - Deploys gun turret (only near claimed Citadel)
F6 - Deploys SAM site (only near claimed Citadel)
F7 - Killer satellite strike (must have factory)
F11 - Toggles Warthunk HUD
O - Satellite map
Backspace - Recalls deployed unit (unit must be targeted)
Enter - Secondary weapon menu
Shift - Deploy unit menu
F - Flies Warthunk (Warthunk must be in the claim square of a command bunker. This command only flies your Warthunk's own and heat-seeking missiles. Your special weapons, Guided Missiles, are replenished by power unit dropping from the sky.)

KEYBOARD

Enter - Secondary weapon menu
Shift - Deploy unit menu
F - Flies Warthunk (Warthunk must be in the claim square of a command bunker. This command only flies your Warthunk's own and heat-seeking missiles. Your special weapons, Guided Missiles, are replenished by power unit dropping from the sky.)

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

SEGA
Pentium 133, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95



This *Virtua Fighter 2* demo features two characters and one arena from the full game.

Player 1:

W - Jump
S - Crouch
A - Back
D - Forward
V - Guard
G - Punch
H - Kick
Z - Start/pause/resume

Player 2:

Up arrow - Jump
Down arrow - Crouch
Left arrow - Back
Right arrow - Forward
Del - Guard
Enter - Start/pause/resume

STARCAST

Blizzard Entertainment
Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

Rolling demo of the long-awaited space-based

Shareware

sequel to the Warcraft games.

ASTRO 3D

Jarrod Davis Software
Pentium 75, 8Mb RAM, Windows 95/MS-DOS

It's the perennial favourite *Asteroids* back again although this time in 3D! Play should be obvious, but basically shoot the asteroids before they pulverise you and take out the alien craft before they inflict a similar fate on you.

BLOOD BATH

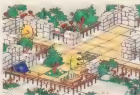
Underworld
Pentium 100, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95

First-person perspective shoot 'em-ups don't come more bloody than this. *Blood Bath* sees you in the role of a Sheriff taking out criminals with an automatic weapon in a graveyard.

BLUPIMANIA

Epitex
486DX, 8Mb RAM, Windows 95/MS-DOS

Following last month's shareware game *Planet*



PATCHES

EF2000

DIB/Docan
The 3Dfx graphics card enhancement for the TATCOM version of EF2000.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

Caregory
Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Windows 95
We bring you the unit viewer and unit archive from this top-scoring real-time strategy wargame.

DUNGEON KEEPER

Bulfrog
This main feature of this patch for *Dungeon Keeper* is improved creature AI. It should only be installed on the full registered version of the game.

X-WING VS THE FIGHTER

LucasArts
Version 1.10 of *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* plus an additional 3Dfx graphics card patch.

Blip!, we now bring you the follow-up *Blipmania*. Your task is to help Blip through several challenging puzzle games using the mouse to guide his actions.

BOOGALOOPERS

Stick Man Games Inc.
Pentium 90, 8Mb RAM, Windows 95

Boogaloopers is an arcade game that requires quick thinking and a steady hand. Your ship is controlled by moving the mouse and you must 'loop' your trail around the objects on screen to destroy them.

EXTACY

Amazing Productions
486DX4, 8Mb RAM, Windows 3.x/95

The object of *Extacy* is to bounce the silver ball up and down platforms and collect coins. You must avoid the skulls, though, because one hit and you're dead. This early version of *Extacy* is a bit cheesy about display settings, so try it with a 256 colour display or try using the standard Windows driver option which can be selected when the game installs.

ON THE FLOPPIES

EXTACY DISK 1

Amazing Productions
486DX4 8Mb RAM, Windows 3.x/95

To install *Extacy*, simply run Windows to MS-DOS and then type A: followed by *Extacy*. Follow the screen and enjoy the automatic suggestions.

BLUPIMANIA DISK 2

Epitex
486DX, 8Mb RAM, Windows 95/MS-DOS
To install *Blupimania*, exit Windows to MS-DOS and type A: followed by return. Now type INSTALL followed by return and then follow the onscreen installation instructions.

GOT A PROBLEM?

If, after following the installation instructions, you're still having trouble getting the games to function on the same computer system as you, it's just possible there may be a problem with the performance of your hardware. Please contact your local computer shop or the publisher for more information and advice.

PC GAMER December Disk, THE P.C., THE HOUSE,
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I HAD THIS BRILLIANT IDEA FOR A game. It was a game unlike the world had ever seen... had even imagined. It was designed by God himself. He came to me in a dream. "John," he called. "John. It is I, God." Naturally, I ignored Him. "John!" he yelled again, then looked down at a piece of paper in his hand and frowned. "No - wait... Nigel. Sorry, Nigel, it is I, God."

"Well, what do you want?" I replied, somewhat tetchily. I'd been watersliding with my local weather girl at that moment, and the appearance of the Almighty looked like scuppering my plans for the rest of the night.

"I want you to create the perfect computer game."

"Why?" I asked.

"BECAUSE I SAY SO!" bellowed The Lord. The breath of God in full voice was strong indeed, and it buffeted my face like... um, like... oh yeah, you know the bit in *Moonraker* - I think it's *Moonraker* - where Roger Moore's in that centrifugal fairground ride, and a sinister hand turns this ominous dial into the red zone, and the machine starts spinning really, *really* quickly, so the G-forces make his face go all wobbly? Like that.

"Oh, right then," I said, once my cheeks had returned to normal.

"And," continued God, "I've noticed that things aren't going too well down there - you know: war, famine, Gametek, that kind of thing - so I thought the people could do with some cheering up. This game will be perfect. It will bring happiness and enlightenment to millions of souls."

"Great."

"I thought so."

And so God told me about the perfect computer game.

I listened for what seemed like hours, but could've been seconds. And when it was over, I nodded my head, and said, "Yes. I understand exactly. Truly, that is the perfect computer game. Good work. I can see how you got to be God, God."

"Aw, shucks," murmured The Lord, and

shimmered out of sight.

As soon as I woke up, I wrote out a detailed design document for the game - or, as I started to call it, *The Game*. I remembered every detail, from the beguilingly simple control system to the complexly layered and infinitely explorable level/mission structure. With single-player gameplay no less satisfying than the multi-player mode, and a constantly evolving challenge, *The Game* was perfect in every way. It took a minute to learn, but a lifetime to master. No, wait - that was *Connect 4*.

But, of course, I couldn't make it on my own. I needed programmers, steeped in arcane digital lore. I needed graphic designers and musicians to provide atmosphere and emotional emphasis.

So I took *The Game* to a software publishing house.

"That's great," said a man in a suit. "We'll have to focus-group the concept, of course, and run it past the marketing strategists to see how it fits in with our projected trend analysis. But I see this with A-grade potential, definitely, and since our last mega-budget interactive movie bombed, and the shareholders in our parent company demand results for this financial year, we've got to have it out third quarter. I know that doesn't quite give us enough time, but if we take out a few of these more complicated ideas, and get in some young coders just out of university, who'll still be keen enough to work late nights, we might just be able to squeeze it out."

Six months later, my game - *God's game* - was in the shops. After an argument with the marketing team over their insultingly gratuitous use of semi-naked women in the promotional campaign, I'd been prevented by the publishing company from taking any part in its development.

So the game which could've changed the world, the most daringly original title ever devised, turned out to be the same as every other sub-standard chod churned out by the corporate machine... almost exactly like *Command & Conquer*, but nowhere near as good.

God came to me again in a dream that night.

"Bugger," He said.

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IT'S All Over...

...but we'll be back with our 'Christmas' issue on 26 November. This, assuming all is well in the land of Id, should contain a review of *Quake II*. How great will it be? Judgement is completely reserved until then...

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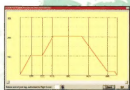
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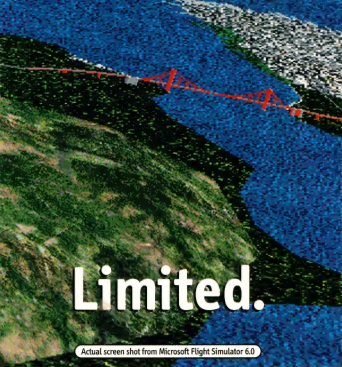
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Actual screen shot from Microsoft Flight Simulator 6.0



Actual screen shot from Looking Glass' Flight Unlimited II

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